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CHURCH AND STATE

The Story of Two Kingdoms

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PREFACE

THE Supreme Court decision concerning prayer in the public schools has brought to the forefront of public interest the problem of the proper relationship between Church and State. Not only the professor in the classroom and the preacher in the pulpit but the man in the street has become vitally concerned about the nature of this relationship. He has become aware suddenly that this is more than an academic problem—the answer to it will affect the lives of his children and the culture of future generations.

The problem of Church-State relationship is age long and has molded our modern civilization. A German historian, Leopold von Ranke, has stated: "The whole life and character of Western Christendom consists of the incessant action and counteraction of Church and State." [1] The vexing problem seemed solved on American soil with the establishment of a free Church in a free State. However, during the first part of the twentieth century there has been a reversal of the traditional attitude—a reversal that has come to public attention with dramatic impact by the Supreme Court decision to eliminate prayer from public school life.

This book seeks to give a historical survey of the relationship between Church and State, beginning with the advent of Christ and brought up to the present day. The author regrets that it is not possible in a brief survey to give the

[1] Quoted by E. W. Smith, *The Creeds of Presbyterians,* p. 119.

history of all nations which have struggled with this problem. With the express purpose of providing an apprehensible panorama of Church-State relationship, the author, with reluctance, has eliminated an account of the history of such nations as Holland and France and such figures as Martin Luther. The field of study is so vast that selection became necessary. The bibliography will prove helpful to those who desire a more comprehensive knowledge of this subject.

The author desires to express his gratitude to Mary J. Brumley and Marian Kendall who have smoothed out the rough places and to several European scholars who have been helpful in their criticisms.

CHURCH AND STATE

The Story of Two Kingdoms

✲ Chapter I ✲

THE PANORAMA OF HISTORY

An American of the twentieth century finds it almost unbelievable that Church and State for hundreds of years faced each other as bitter enemies, literally at sword's point. Yet, that long and bitter struggle for supremacy spelled out, through the centuries, one of the most fascinating stories in human history. With equal tenacity, Church and State stood their ground—employed diplomacy, threats, brainwashing, armed might, and even torture in their separate attempts to crush the adversary and win ascendancy over him.

After some centuries of this deadly struggle, the two powerful Kingdoms found in the newly independent United States of America a chance for their own independence and peaceful coexistence. The doctrine of "a free Church in a free State" was a new tenet in statecraft, as were various other ideas of the Founding Fathers: an experiment pure and simple. But the experiment proved successful; separation of Church and State became *fait accompli* in this country and has endured for nearly 200 years. Problems and tensions have arisen during the interim, of course, as one Kingdom or the other has sought to invade the domain of the other. Nonetheless, the principle of the separation of Church and State is still an actuality in our national life.

We could easily be lulled into believing that peaceful and happy coexistence will continue without any earnest and sacrificial vigilance on our part. But with increasing Roman

Catholic influence in politics, and the desire of even some Protestant church leaders to dominate the State, we as Christian citizens should be ever on our guard, lest in our indifference we allow a precious heritage to slip away. Truly, "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

The story of the two Kingdoms needs to be told and retold. We cannot afford to forget the dramatic lessons of history. Each generation must learn for itself the tremendous price that was paid to obtain the mutual independence of Church and State.

The Panorama of History

Imagine, if you will, a panoramic canvas on which appear a series of objects and persons which represent outstanding events in the history of the relationship of Church and State. As this panorama is unrolled, we see first a picture of a document, then a personality, and next a community or perhaps a symbol. Each stands for a dramatic event that occurred at a particular time in the relationships of the two Kingdoms with which we are concerned.

First of all, we view a document which the great British statesman, William Gladstone, called "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man."[1] This is the Constitution of the United States of America, which provides that

> no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

And, lest there be any lurking doubt as to the independence of the Church from the power of the State, the First Amendment to the Constitution further provides that

[1] "Kin beyond Sea," *North American Review*, Sept. 1878.

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

These two clear, simple sentences, which did not come without a conflict—even on American soil—mark the finale of centuries of bitter struggle between the two Kingdoms.

The panoramic canvas is further unrolled and we see a young man pleading earnestly and eloquently before a venerable company of divines. The young man is George Gillespie, Scottish Presbyterian minister, and his audience is the assembly of learned and godly divines who met in the Jerusalem Chamber of London's Westminster Abbey on June 12, 1643, summoned by the British Parliament "for the settling of the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England." The debate centers around the question as to whether the Lord Jesus Christ has the right to govern, by his own laws and officers, the Church which he purchased for himself with his blood. The Erastians in the group maintain that the State has supreme authority in ecclesiastical affairs. But so convincingly does the young Scottish commissioner speak, and so clearly does he expound the scriptural position, that he sweeps away all opposition. And as a result we find in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* one of the best delineations of the proper boundaries between, and the separate jurisdictions of, Church and State.

Young Gillespie was no late arrival in the Church-State tug of war; he spoke from a background of tremendous struggle in Scotland. There, half a century earlier, a Scottish clergyman named Andrew Melville had confronted King James VI in Falkland Palace. Addressing His Majesty as "God's silly vassal" and holding fast to his sleeve the while. the good man spoke some memorable words:

> Sir, we will always humbly reverence your Majesty in public; but, since we have this occasion to be with your

> Majesty in private, and . . . the country and the Church of Christ are like to go to wreck, for not telling you the truth and giving you faithful counsel, we must discharge our duty or else be traitors both to Christ and you. Therefore, Sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again I must tell you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: There is King James, the lord of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose Kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member.[2]

It took fortitude to confront thus a king who had tyrannical aspirations to control the Church, but Andrew Melville declared boldly and without fear the New Testament principle of the two Kingdoms and their separate and distinct jurisdictions.

Another Scot, John Knox, had helped to pave the way for separation of Church and State by courageously facing Queen Mary at a time when that lady seemed most determined to impose Roman Catholicism upon the people of Scotland. His confrontation of Mary makes for one of the most intense scenes in religious history. The Queen accuses Knox of having

> taught the people to receive another religion than their princes can allow: and how can that doctrine be of God, seeing that God commands the people to obey their princes.

And to the sovereign claim of authority over the consciences of her subjects, Knox replies, "Religion [comes not] from worldly princes, but from the Eternal God alone."[3]

On another occasion—when the secretary of state, Maitland of Lethington, protested a meeting of the General Assembly without the permission of the Queen—Knox replied:

[2] *Melville's Diary*, pp. 245–246.

[3] John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland*, p. 233.

> Take from us the liberty of assemblies, and take from us the gospel. If the liberty of the Church must depend upon her allowance or disallowance, we shall want not only assemblies, but the preaching of the gospel.[4]

The next important scene appearing on the panoramic canvas is laid in Geneva, Switzerland, in the year 1536, when that city had just been delivered from political and ecclesiastical tyranny. The citizens were ignorant and unaccustomed to self-rule; and their priests had set them examples of unrestrained vice. Gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, adultery, blasphemy, and kindred evils were commonplace, so that, altogether, the city presented a sad spectacle to the newly arrived French refugee, John Calvin. And then occurred a veritable miracle; for this man—unknown, penniless, and propounding ideas that were resisted from the very beginning—brought the city under such discipline and control that his influence remains even to this day. The means employed to reach his goal were spiritual. To define the separate jurisdictions of Church and State and to prevail upon the State to grant the independence of the Church were his immediate tasks. For his efforts, he was thrown out of the city within two years but later was entreated to return. Calvin's teaching on the separation of Church and State forms the groundwork for the civil and religious liberty which found expression in Holland, Scotland, and America.

The reluctance of the Republic of Geneva to relinquish control of the Church was occasioned by fear of the Trireg-num, or Triple Crown, which appears next on our panoramic canvas. This Triple Crown, which was worn by the popes for ceremonial events, symbolized alike the Roman pontiff's spiritual supremacy, his temporal dominion, and his sovereignty over all earthly monarchs. The unhappy circumstances of Church control over the State made the hearts of liberty-

[4] *Ibid.*, p: 242.

loving sixteenth-century citizens fearful, as indeed it inspires fear to this very day. Thus, the Triregnum, and the power it symbolized, explains why various secular rulers were determined to keep control over the Church during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

We see the power of the Triple Crown over the mightiest monarch of Western Christendom when we glimpse the German emperor, Henry IV—barefoot and in penitent's garb—at the snow-encrusted castle gate of Canossa, pleading for mercy from Pope Gregory VII. The year was 1077. Two years earlier, Henry—following the practice of his royal predecessors—had made an appointment to the Archbishopric of Milan. Pope Gregory, then busily seeking to free the Church from the control of secular rulers, took him to task for this appointment. Henry retaliated by denouncing Gregory as "not pope, but false monk," whereupon Gregory deposed Henry, forbade anyone to serve him as king, and excommunicated him. Such was the power of the pope that Henry sped to Italy in the dead of winter to plead for absolution.

Gregory VII (1021–1085), almost better known as the Hildebrand who was the maker and adviser of popes in an earlier era, held the papal chair from 1073 to 1085 and during that period authored *Dictatus Papae,* which both expresses his conception of the papal office and defines the papal power in 27 affirmations. Among them we note that

> The Roman Church was founded by God alone; the Roman pope alone can with right be called universal; he alone may use the imperial insignia; his feet only shall be kissed by all princes; he may depose the emperors; he himself may be judged by no one; the Roman Church has never erred, nor will it err in all eternity.

These assertions reveal the Roman Catholic belief that the pope, as God's representative upon earth, had claim to absolute world supremacy, a belief that the papacy still holds.

Our next scene takes us back to the year 800 A.D. Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, is kneeling in prayer before the altar in St. Peter's, and Pope Leo III is placing a golden crown upon his head. The people are shouting: "To Charles Augustus, crowned by God, the great and pacific emperor of the Romans, life and victory!"

What was the real significance of this coronation? Did it signify that the pope had the right to crown secular rulers as well as to declare their reigns ended? Did it mean the pope's acknowledgment of Charlemagne and his successors as the divinely appointed protectors of the Church and regulators of her affairs? Church and State were to be involved for centuries in a struggle to determine the answers to these questions.

Next, we view a Roman army, bearing standards of the Christian cross instead of the customary Roman eagles—even the shields of the soldiers are emblazoned with the sign of the cross. What, we wonder, had transformed an apparently pagan army, equipped with idolatrous standards, into an ostensibly Christian army? And in the answer lies one of history's most enchanting tales.

It was the year 312 A.D., and the Roman Emperor Constantine faced the heathen Maxentius in battle before the gates of Rome. Filled with apprehension as to the outcome of the battle, Constantine fell asleep and saw in a dream the cross with the inscription: *By this sign thou shalt conquer!* In the sign of the cross Constantine did conquer, and the outcome was the *Edict of Milan,* issued in the following year. By this edict Christian societies received for the first time the acknowledgment and sanction of the law. Church and State were beginning to be understood as two arms of one and the same divine government on earth. With Constantine came the conjunction of Christianity with politics and the mingling of the spiritual with the secular.

No better symbol could have been used than that which appears next on the panoramic canvas, namely, the Great Red Dragon—a symbol used in Scripture to depict the terrible persecuting power of pagan Rome during the first three centuries. All the torture which rack and cross, fire and sword, wild beasts and beastly men could inflict were employed by pagan Rome as weapons against Christianity. Followers of Christ were nailed to the cross, covered with pitch and set afire, roasted or slowly boiled, thrown to hungry lions, torn apart by ropes being pulled in any and all directions, and subjected to other torments too horrible for description. By a miracle of God, the true Church was not crushed. The Lamb conquered the Dragon, truth vanquished error, the cross conquered the sword, and spiritual power prevailed against carnal power. Tertullian, who lived in the midst of this terrible persecution, prophetically stated that "the blood of the Christians is the seed of the Church." [5]

As we turn from the horrifying persecutions of the Roman Caesars, we can scarcely believe our eyes at the next scene. The apostle Paul is standing before Caesar's judgment seat and crying out, "I appeal unto Caesar!" (Acts 25:11.) How can this be? During the period of Jewish persecution, Paul and other members of the early Church survived because of the protecting care of the Roman magistrates and rulers. In an important period of the primitive Church, the Roman Empire fulfilled its God-given duty of protecting the innocent from ill-treatment or death for religious convictions.

Last to appear before us as we turn back the panoramic canvas is Calvary's Cross. One of the greatest ironies of history is that He who so clearly demonstrated that His Kingdom was *not* of this world and that His weapons were spiritual was accused of meddling with the political affairs of an earthly kingdom. Pilate saw through the accusation and

[5] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* vol. II, p. 35.

said, "I find no fault in him at all" (John 18:38). Pilate judged that the Kingdom which would be established by the power of truth alone would be no claimant for the jurisdiction of the Kingdom established by the power of the sword. He realized that Jesus laid claim to a sphere entirely different from that of a Caesar. Christ's accusers, however, conceived His ambitions to be political like their own and cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar" (John 19:12). Thus, Pilate—yielding to pressure exerted by ecclesiastics—ordered that Jesus be crucified.

From the writing of the Constitution of the United States back to the scene at Calvary's Cross we have witnessed the dramatic incidents of the history of Church-State conflict. We have seen the struggle for domination and the peace that comes when both Kingdoms realize the ideal of "a free Church in a free State." Let us look now at the scenes that we have sketched and observe them in greater detail.

✲ Chapter II ✲

A KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD

CHARGES of meddling with the affairs of Caesar's kingdom and setting himself up as a rival to Caesar incited the crucifixion of Jesus. The Jewish authorities cried before Pilate: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (Luke 23:2).

The greatest crime in the eyes of Rome was treason against the State, and therefore it merited the heaviest penalty. Pilate's immediate challenge to Christ was on this charge: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33.) Jesus answered in the affirmative but at the same time defined the implication of his affirmation, saying, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).

Pilate could not conceive a king without a military force and immediately asked, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). Christ's weapon was the force of truth rather than the force of military might—not by the coercive power of the sword, but by the persuasive power of the truth, would His Kingdom be established.

Then scoffed the cynical Pilate, "What is truth?", for he

trusted only in the coercive power and authority of the sword and could not understand a kingdom established by the spiritual weapons of truth and love.

And so on to judgment, where—after pondering over the charge that Christ was meddling in the affairs of Rome—he at last said, "I find no fault in him at all" (John 18:38). Pilate was certain of this at least, that no spiritual type of kingdom, and no spiritual power of truth, could pose any threat to Caesar's rule. Jesus, he judged, would not try to use political or physical power to establish His Kingdom, and *those* were the types of opposition that Caesar most feared.

But the Jews, stubbornly asserting that Jesus had entered into the political sphere and so was a rival to Caesar, cried out to the Roman governor, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar" (John 19:12). This veiled threat settled things in short order. Pilate forthwith commanded the death of Christ, not because he was at all convinced of the truth of the charge against our Lord, but because he was afraid of the political threats of the Jews. And so Christ was crucified on the false charge of meddling with the civil affairs of Caesar's kingdom.

Herod's Judgment

Thirty years before Pilate judged Jesus innocent of political aspirations, Herod the Great had believed that the birth of the Messiah indicated a civil power that would eventually usurp his throne.

When Mary brought forth her first-born, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem and with great expectancy asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen

his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). Exceedingly troubled, Herod determined to crush out the life of this infant who was born to be a King.

Herod typifies hundreds of tyrants whose place in history has been marked by their attempts to stamp out the Kingdom of Christ. Revelation 12:3–5 gives us a vivid and symbolic picture of the opposition of ungodly civil power in these graphic words:

> And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

The great red dragon represents ungodly kingdoms opposing the Kingdom of Christ. But, even as Herod failed to destroy the infant Jesus, so would other kingdoms of the earth fail to crush the spiritual Kingdom of the living Christ.

Satan's Strategy

Sometimes subtlety was substituted for cruel force in defeating the purpose of God to save the nations through Christ. Such subtlety was seen in the temptation of Jesus. Satan knew that Christ was to be Lord over the nations, but in the temptation of our Saviour he revealed to Jesus how easily dominion over the world could be obtained if He simply bowed the knee to Satan and yielded to *his* method

of conquest. But no, kingship would be Christ's by way of humility, weakness, suffering, and death.

Satan showed to Jesus all the kingdoms and their glory, the world with its crowns, scepters, magnificent cities, boundless treasures, and countless millions of inhabitants. Wealth, power, and glory could be Christ's in the name of Satan. He could be a king with greater glory than Solomon's, with a swifter conquest than Alexander the Great's, with greater power than Caesar's, and with vaster territories than any previous earthly monarch. This would mean, of course, subjection of all nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues by force and holding them in thrall through fear. Caesar's sword would be substituted for the sword of the Spirit.

It was a powerful temptation. Christ could wield this dominion for the material welfare of mankind. He could increase their riches, comforts, and pleasures, become a benevolent ruler and elevate the cultural standards of his subjects. To such a subtle temptation, a good man—inspired by ideals for mankind's advancement—might easily yield. And this ideal could be achieved simply and easily by a mere acknowledgment of the overlordship of Satan.

Christ defeated the strategy of Satan by quoting God's revealed truth. Pilate might disdainfully and scornfully say, "What is truth?" but truth, as Christ so vividly illustrated, conquers Satan.

Although Satan left Jesus for a season after the temptation, he harassed him again to achieve kingship painlessly when the people attempted to make Jesus king by force. Christ had just finished feeding the multitude by means of the five barley loaves and two fishes. The manifestation of such material power convinced the people that the promised Kingdom had arrived, and they sought to make Jesus their king. Christ fled the temptation and went into the mountain to pray, afterwards accused the people of desiring his kingship

"because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." They had reduced the concept of the Messiah's Kingdom to that of material prosperity, and Jesus rebuked them by saying, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27). So have sincere people often tried to reduce Christ's mission on earth to the mere multiplication of loaves and fishes.

Another subtle temptation came to Christ when one of his followers asked him to act as judge concerning material matters. "Master," the man said, "speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (Luke 12:13–15). The man was assuming that the Messiah would have an earthly kingdom, and that one of its chief concerns would be the matter of just division of earthly goods. Jesus answered him sharply, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Alas, the Church today has not even withstood the earthly temptation, and still often seeks to divide wealth. Jesus, in this incident, revealed his true vocation, namely, that of bringing God's salvation to lost men.

Often Christ's very disciples tempted their Master to achieve his goal without suffering and death. When Jesus revealed that he would suffer many things of the elders, chief priests, and scribes and be killed at their hands, Peter rebuked him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Again Jesus recognized the familiar voice of Satan, seeking to deter him from the way of the cross, and so rebuked Peter in these words: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:22–23).

On another occasion, in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter used the sword in an attempt to protect his Lord. Again he was rebuked, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"

(Matthew 26:52). There have been many Peters in the history of the church who have attempted to advance the Kingdom by the power of the sword; and, as Christ had prophesied, they have perished. Victory cannot be obtained other than by the way through Christ's cross.

The sword belongs to Caesar's kingdom and it cannot be used to advance the cause of Christ. These two Kingdoms operate in different spheres and employ different means. Christ answered the question of the Herodians, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:17–21). The Herodians belonged to a Jewish political party which realized that the spiritual teachings of Christ would not advance their political aims—and their ranks were swelled by the Pharisees, who wanted to lead a political rebellion against the Romans. With this bloc, we can sense that these men sought to commit Jesus to a political position. And so, "Is it lawful," they asked, "to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" But Jesus would not ally himself with the cause of the Herodians, whose authority for religious matters was Herod—neither would He join forces with the Pharisees, who denied the authority of the Roman government. In both cases, He refused to act the part of a political messiah and carefully established both the boundary of Caesar and that of God.

Preview of History

The narrative of the Gospels gives us a preview of the history of the struggle between the two Kingdoms. When a secular kingdom is animated by Satan, it will seek to crush the spiritual Kingdom by force, even as Herod sought to crush the Christ Child. Worldly kingdoms will be employed by religious hierarchies to crucify true believers, even as

Pilate was used by the Jewish hierarchy to crucify Christ. Inspired by evil, earthly kingdoms have taken on the nature of a great red dragon, breathing out fire and destruction against the forces of righteousness.

However, one must not assume that secular kingdoms are inherently evil. The State is a divine institution created by God for the purpose of upholding moral law and punishing sin. He has created it to further the welfare and happiness of mankind. But Satan often thwarts God's benevolent purpose, so that nations have become persecutors of those who belong to Christ's Kingdom. This has been especially true when the States have espoused the cause of pagan religions or a perverted form of Christianity. But when the State keeps to its God-given jurisdiction, it can be a power for good, as indeed it was in the period of the Church's first expansion.

The subtlety of Satan in tempting Jesus was a forerunner of his constant efforts at tempting the Church to rely upon the coercive power of the State instead of upon the persuasive power that comes from revealed truth. History shows that the Church has often succumbed to that temptation, much to her sorrow and shame. The power of Caesar seems much more effective than the power of Christ, the power of the sword more protective than the power of the cross.

Conflict in History

Although the nature and boundaries of the two Kingdoms are rather clearly defined in Scripture, their historical conflict over jurisdiction forms a gigantic jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of which historians and theologians have long endeavored to fit into their proper places. One thing, however, becomes apparent as the panorama of history is viewed, and that is that the two Kingdoms come into real and cruel con-

flict only when the proper jurisdictions are forgotten or ignored.

Liberty and peace, as history so clearly reveals, are the precious fruits that emanate when both the secular Kingdom and the spiritual Kingdom properly fulfill their God-given functions.

✲ Chapter III ✲

"I APPEAL UNTO CAESAR"

THE dramatic appeal of the apostle Paul, as a Roman citizen, for the protection of pagan Rome brings into bold relief that short period of the first century during which a Christian could petition the State for deliverance from religious persecution. Many centuries were to pass before Christians could again experience such protection.

The phenomenal growth of the Church during the period described in the book of Acts can be explained, in part, by the protection that Rome provided. Thus Paul, writing to Timothy, urged that prayers be offered for all kings in order that Christians might live in peace and have opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to all men. Without the protection of Rome, the infant Christian Church would have been crushed by her Jewish enemies or, at the very least, her growth would have been retarded. But, because the Church enjoyed liberty to preach the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, Paul was able to witness to the Colossians (1:6) that the truth of the Gospel "is come unto you, as it is in all the world."

Among the charges which the Jews leveled against Paul was that he was leading the Jews to rebel against Rome. Both Felix and Festus, procurators over Judea, discerned that Paul was innocent of the crime of treason. But Festus, in order to please the Jews, asked Paul if he were willing to be tried by the Jewish court in Jerusalem. Paul, knowing that it was impossible to receive a fair trial before the Sanhedrin,

replied, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged . . . I appeal unto Caesar." Festus answered, "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go" (Acts 25:10–11).

Protection in Corinth

Even before the Apostle petitioned to be tried in Rome, he and his fellow Christians had been shielded by Roman power. In Corinth (Acts 18:1–17), where Paul preached with great success for a year and a half, unbelieving Jews rose *en masse* against him and brought him before the Roman deputy, Gallio, with the charge that: "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." Paul was about to begin his defense when he received aid from an unexpected quarter and Gallio interrupted to say,

> If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

And with this terse statement he drove them from the judgment seat.

Gallio drew a careful distinction between the respective jurisdictions of civil and ecclesiastical courts. If Paul had been accused of theft, bodily injury, or rebellion, Gallio would have tried the Apostle on those charges. Wicked lewdness, which was a common sin in Corinth, would also have justified a trial, the deputy declared. But, since the accusation was in the realm of theology and involved an ecclesiastical controversy, he threw the matter out of court. Theological law was a question about which the Roman deputy chose not to concern himself.

Protection in Ephesus

Paul unwittingly drew several of his friends into a controversy with a pagan religion in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–41), but the town clerk there judged the matter to be outside the jurisdiction of the city assembly. All this happened because Paul's preaching of the Gospel was so successful that Demetrius, a silversmith who made shrines for the goddess Diana, thought that his occupation was endangered. That worthy thereupon led the other craftsmen into inciting mob action against two of Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, who were promptly hustled to the city theater for trial. Paul wanted to defend them, but his friends dissuaded him. The Jews put forward a certain Alexander, possibly to explain that they were not at fault. But the citizens—upon learning that he was a Jew—cried out for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The town clerk, who turned out to be a man of common sense and to possess a knowledge of Roman law, said:

> Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

And with these words he dismissed them.

A civil crime, in the town clerk's opinion, had not been committed, and hence there was no reason to summon an assembly. If Demetrius had a real case against the Christians, he could seek justice through the regular procedure of the law. The preaching of the Gospel, even though it had a disastrous effect on the sales of pagan images, was not breaking the law. Thus, Christians, as long as they did not commit a civil offense, were allowed the freedom of propagating the Gospel.

Primary Loyalty

On the other hand, the Jewish civil court, the Sanhedrin, entered into the ecclesiastical sphere and sought to silence the witness of the Gospel. The Sanhedrin forbade Peter and John to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus. To this injunction the apostles replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). At great cost this principle has been maintained by courageous Christians through the centuries, whenever the civil courts, overstepping their proper jurisdiction, have sought to silence the preaching of the Gospel.

The ruling of the Sanhedrin had followed a miracle just performed in the temple by Peter and John. A beggar had asked for alms but Peter replied, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). News of this miracle had circulated rapidly and many had gathered to hear the apostles. Peter therefore had taken this occasion to preach the Gospel and had concluded his message with the account of the Resurrection. The enraged Sadducees, who did not believe in the Resurrection and so scorned the teaching of this doctrine, joined with the priests in the arrest of Peter

and John. Thus, on the following day, the two apostles were tried before the Sanhedrin. After consultation, the council commanded them neither to speak nor teach in the name of Jesus; but the apostles, in obedience to the divine commission, disobeyed the unlawful prohibition.

During the course of the centuries, the examples set by the apostles have been followed not by thousands but literally by millions of Christians. Again and again the State, often under the influence of tyrannical ecclesiastics, has endeavored to silence the witness of the Gospel. But in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword Christians have replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Civil disobedience is justified only when the State goes beyond its God-given boundaries; when Caesar claims the things of God, obedience cannot be rendered to him.

Paul's Appeal to Caesar

Paul's reputation as a successful missionary had preceded him to Jerusalem, and the Christians there feared that the Jews, through misunderstanding the intent of Paul's teaching, would do violence to his person. In an effort to avert such a disaster, they advised him to perform the ritual in the temple to show that he was not a disorderly person arrogantly disobeying the Law. (Cf. Acts 21:20–26.)

This strategy misfired, however. Certain Jews from Asia saw Paul in the temple and stirred up a tumult against him. He would have been killed had it not been for the intervention of the Roman guard, which rescued him. The captain of the guard allowed him to speak to the Jews, but when the crowd grew unruly he commanded that Paul be brought into the castle. There, he ordered him to be scourged, a procedure calculated to make prisoners talk, whereupon Paul said to

the centurion, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" Upon learning of Paul's Roman citizenship, they loosed his bonds and arranged for a meeting between him and his accusers. (Cf. Acts 21:27–22:30.)

One can understand from the events that followed why Paul had no liking for a second trial in Jerusalem. The chief priests and the council assembled, and he had no sooner started his defense than the high priest ordered him smitten on the mouth. Realizing that justice would be a stranger to the council members and perceiving that said council consisted of the two rival parties of Sadducees and Pharisees, Paul cried out, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6).

This pronouncement started a free-for-all among the members of the council, for the Sadducees—unlike the Pharisees—did not believe in a resurrection, and this was a sore point between the two factions. Although the opposing parties almost pulled Paul apart, the chief captain succeeded in rescuing him and finally sent him to Caesarea to be tried before Felix, the Roman procurator.

Paul's accusers laid two general charges against him before Felix; namely, that he had profaned the temple and that he was an inciter of insurrection. They knew that Felix would have no interest in the charge of profanation of the temple, but they did feel that he would take seriously the accusation of treason against Rome, which was an unpardonable offense. Felix, however, deferred judgment, knowing that Paul was innocent, and kept him in custody with the hope that Paul would pay for his freedom. Then, two years later, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix in the office of procurator.

The Jewish leaders tried to influence Festus into having Paul tried at Jerusalem, but the Roman set the trial instead

at Caesarea. Again, the same charges were leveled at Paul and again without proof. Paul's answer was, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all." Although Festus knew him to be innocent, he asked Paul whether he would be willing to be tried in Jerusalem. Then said Paul,

> I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go" (Acts 25:8–12).

What eventually happened to Paul when he appeared before Caesar's court in Rome we are not told. That he was well received and allowed to dwell by himself, we learn from the remaining portions of the book of Acts, which concludes with the statement that Paul

> received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Even though the Apostle was under arrest, pagan Rome allowed him full liberty to propagate the Gospel.

Separate Jurisdictions

Strange as it may seem in view of the history of Church and State relations, the Christian Church for several decades enjoyed the protection of pagan Rome. During this period, both parties kept to their proper jurisdictions. Pagan Rome

protected the infant Church from being crushed by her Jewish enemies; the Church confined herself to the proclamation of the Gospel and in no way interfered with the external affairs of the Roman Empire.

Because she concentrated on her task of proclaiming salvation and keeping herself pure from heretical teaching, the Church grew in numbers and in influence during this brief period. Her expansion was indeed phenomenal. Thousands were delivered from pagan darkness; church after church was established; and the Gospel was proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire. This period of history gives a vivid illustration of what the Church can accomplish when both she and the State keep within their God-given jurisdictions.

✲ Chapter IV ✲

THE GREAT RED DRAGON

THE book of Revelation pictures a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, in conflict with the Lamb. What apt symbolism to describe the apparently unequal struggle between paganism and Christianity during the first three centuries! Rome, the mightiest empire of ancient times, determined to annihilate the defenseless Christian Church. Caesar's sword would destroy the Cross. The dragon would consume the Lamb.

What had brought about such a turn of events? What was causing Rome now to persecute the Church that she had afforded her protection for the past several decades?

Rome, at first, did not understand the true nature of Christianity and thus confused it with Judaism. Rome had its own religion, its own gods; but it had made a practice of tolerating the local exercise of the religions of conquered nations, among them that of the Jews. The Jewish religion was decreed a *religio licita,* a tolerated religion. This Roman toleration, however, did not permit a religion to proselytize among Roman citizens. Judaism, in the main, adhered to this prohibition and made no major effort to convert Romans.

This fact was recognized by both Rome and Judaism and, even though the latter was hated for its claim to exclusive truth, it was protected by Roman law. Christianity, at its

birth and infancy, was confused by the Romans with the Jewish religion and so also received protection as a *religio licita,* a tolerated religion.

But this friendly climate was soon to chill. Slowly but inevitably it dawned upon Rome that Christianity, unlike the national religions such as Judaism, claimed to be the only true universal one and that the new faith was fast making converts in every corner of the far-flung Roman Empire. The Cross attracted far more Greeks and Romans than Jews, and these converts formed societies in every town, province, and nation within the Empire—societies for the avowed purpose of worshiping Christ the King. Loyalty to this Lord was as strong as, and indeed stronger than, loyalty to Caesar—followers of this Christ were willing to die for Him, even as Romans were willing to die for Caesar. All of this convinced Rome that strange things were afoot. A strange and powerful empire was growing up in their midst and one thing that Rome neither desired nor would tolerate was an *imperium in imperio.* None of this kingdom within a kingdom business for them!

Altogether, the growth of Christianity was unwelcome news to the Romans, to say the least, for the throne of Caesar rested upon the altar of idolatry. While Rome tolerated other religions than their own, their state religion was considered supreme and was used as a tool of imperial policy. Of this state religion, Caesar was the chief priest, the Pontifex Maximus and, as such, Caesar claimed sovereignty not only over the bodies of men but over their souls as well. Some of the Caesars went even farther, asserted their own divinity and demanded worship of themselves on that basis. Now, Christianity, the new religion, also imperiled the state religion and would not tolerate the claim of Caesar to be Pontifex Maximus. Gradually Rome realized the threat Christi-

anity posed to the paganism with which its political position was intertwined.

The conflict between Rome and Christianity came to a head on the issue of emperor worship. Acknowledging but *one* Lord, the faithful Christian could scarcely worship Caesar also as Lord. The Romans, who worshiped many gods, could not understand this attitude. They even interpreted it as one of revolt and anarchy, as illustrated in the martyrdom of Polycarp.

That sturdy Christian stood his ground when, after his arrest, he was asked by the captain of police, "Why, what harm is there in saying, Caesar is Lord, and offering incense and saving thyself?" Polycarp stated his reason for refusing to do so. Again, when later he was commanded by the proconsul to "Swear by the genius of Caesar; repent and say, 'Away with the atheists; revile the Christ,'" Polycarp answered, "Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Upon this, he was bound to a stake and burned —his brave words had sealed his fate.[1]

There were other points where Christianity came in conflict with paganism. The simplicity of Christian worship, with its lack of altars and images, caused the pagans to charge that Christians were unbelievers, and frequent cries of "Away with the atheists" were raised against them by the multitude. The purity of life among the Christian communities was another point at issue—it contrasted sharply with the dissolute life of the heathens, and this provoked antagonism and hatred. Christians often found it impossible to serve in the Roman army because this service *per se* involved emperor worship. The masses misunderstood all this, and they as well as the Caesars rose up against the followers of Christ.

[1] *Martyrium Polycarpi,* preserved by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* IV, 15.

The Ten Horns of Persecution

Many historians reckon ten great persecutions as conforming to the ten horns of the great red dragon of the book of Revelation. These persecutions are said to have been under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimus Severus, Maximinus, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian. The sufferings involved under each rule were not all equal in intensity, but they were all sufficiently severe to be noteworthy. History records no longer nor more bitter struggle than that of the Caesars against the followers of the Lamb.

Roman persecution began on a major scale with Nero, whose name has become a symbol of cruel tyranny. On the 19th of July, A.D. 64, a terrible fire started in Rome, which raged for six days and seven nights and laid the greater part of the city in ruins. Both his contemporaries and future historians have been unanimous in attributing this fire to Nero, who tried to divert suspicion from himself by placing the blame upon the Christians and forthwith ordered them put to death. Some were crucified; some were sewn up in the skins of wild animals and torn to pieces by savage dogs; some were smeared with pitch and burned at night for torches. This persecution was a two-edged sword. While incited by Nero to divert suspicion from himself, it had the effect of publicizing Christianity as an unlicensed religion and its members as haters of the human race, and henceforth it become popular practice to blame local and national calamities upon the Christians.

The second wave of persecution came during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81–96), who gradually assumed for himself despotic powers and demanded that public worship be given to him as *Dominus et Deus*. The Christians refused to worship him, and suffered martyrdom as a result. Hearing that

the Jews expected a Messiah from the house of David, the Emperor—in his insane jealousy—issued an edict that all descendants of David be destroyed. He also learned that two relatives of the Christ whom the Christians worshiped were living in Palestine, and he summoned them to appear before him in Rome. They were grandsons of Jude, "the brother of the Lord." They acknowledged their descent from the royal house, and their relation to the Messiah; but they explained that the Kingdom which they expected was purely spiritual and would commence only at the end of the world. They were peasants with toil-gnarled hands—and their simplicity and poverty at last convinced Domitian that they were harmless, and he let them go.

Not only did the Christians suffer persecution under tyrants but also under emperors who were known to be both wise and human, such as the Emperor Trajan, who reigned from A.D. 98 to 117. His attitude toward Christianity is revealed in his correspondence with Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia. In that province, Pliny found the new faith spreading so rapidly that heathen temples were being discarded and sacrificial animals were not being sold. Pliny put some Christians, women among them, to the torture, in order to determine the truth of accusations laid against them by the heathen hordes, but could detect nothing further, however, than that they were "culpable and extravagantly superstitious." He discovered that they had a custom of meeting together and singing hymns to Christ as God and that they were under mutual obligation not to commit theft, robbery, adultery, or fraud. But they did refuse to adore the statues of the gods and of the emperor alike, nor would they revile Christ.

The findings of this survey were a matter of grave concern to Pliny and he lost little time in decreeing death for those who refused to obey his orders.

Desiring imperial approval for his actions, Pliny then asked the Emperor whether he should show clemency in respect to age, and whether he should treat the bearing of the Christian designation as a crime, to which Trajan replied:

> You have adopted the right course, my friend, with regard to the Christians; for no universal rule, to be applied to all cases, can be laid down in this matter. They should not be searched for; but when accused and convicted, they should be punished; yet if any one denies that he has been a Christian, and proves it by action, namely, by worshiping our gods, he is to be pardoned upon his repentance.[2]

This decision had the effect of making the profession of Christianity a capital crime and it was declared to be an unlawful religion.

Among the martyrs during this period were Symeon, the 120-year-old bishop of Jerusalem, and Ignatius of Antioch. The venerable bishop was crucified. Ignatius was tried before the Emperor and threatened with execution if he refused to sacrifice to the gods. He refused and Trajan condemned him to be thrown to the lions in the arena. It was on the 20th day of December, A.D. 107, we read, that he was thrown to the beasts in the amphitheater.

The fourth period of intense persecution came under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius who, for his generation, was just and kind, although he had no sympathy with Christianity and regarded it as an absurd and fanatical superstition. Unluckily, during his reign there were a number of public calamities for which the populace blamed the Christians. If the Tiber overflowed, or if the Nile did not overflow, a cry was raised, "The Christians to the lions."

Being thrown to the lions was a comparatively mild death for the victims. Compared to that grim fate, some tortures were too horrible to describe. We learn that many perished in

[2] Philip Schaff, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.

the suffocating air of foul dungeons; many had their feet strained to dislocation in the stocks; some were made to sit in a heated iron chair or had hot plates of iron placed upon the most sensitive parts of their bodies.

Among the thousands who suffered during this time was Blandina, a female slave. Afflicted by a horrible succession of torments and urged meanwhile to repent and acknowledge that Christians were guilty of cannibalism and incestuous practices, she made reply, "I am a Christian, and no wickedness is practiced among us." [3] She was then suspended on a stake where she prayed for others who were being devoured by wild animals before her very eyes. Afterwards she was further tormented and then placed in a heated iron chair. When this failed to bring about her "repentence," she was enclosed in a net and thrown to the bulls. They tossed her on their horns until a more "merciful" barbarian ended her misery by a sword thrust.

Under Septimus Severus, who reigned from A.D. 193 to 211, a rigid law was enacted against the further spread of Christianity which occasioned the fifth wave of persecutions, particularly in Egypt and North Africa. Among those martyred was Perpetua, a young woman of noble birth, who was imprisoned shortly after giving birth to a child. Her heathen father pleaded with her to recant and asserted that he and the child alike would be persecuted and tortured because of her devotion to Christ. He cried to her, "Daughter, have pity on my gray hairs. Bring no such shame upon your father. Behold your child cannot live without your care." To this the judge added his entreaties, beseeching her to "have mercy on the gray hairs of your father and on the tender age of your babe. Sacrifice to the emperor!" To this Perpetua replied only, "I am a Christian," after which she was thrown before the wild beasts and later executed.[4]

[3] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V. 1.
[4] Theod. Ruinart, *Acta Primorum Martyrum*, p. 82.

The sixth persecution came during the three-year rule of Maximus the Thracian (A.D. 235–238). His apparent motive was to reverse the policy of his predecessor, Alexander Severus, who had been well disposed toward the Christians. His first step was to order all the bishops to be killed. At the same time the popular fury was excited by an earthquake, for which the Christians of course were blamed, and the people were allowed to express their vengeance upon them.

The next persecution exceeded all preceding ones in extent and cruelty. Emperor Decius Trajan, during his reign (A.D. 249–251), determined to annihilate the Church and published an edict to all the governors of the provinces, commanding return of all people to the pagan state religion, under heaviest penalities in the event of their failure to do so. For, despite persecutions, Christianity had grown to such a degree that it was now considered a threat to the State.

Confiscation, exile, imprisonment, and torture were enforced to move Christians to sacrifice to pagan gods and revile Christ. Many nominal Christians yielded to these pressures and apostatized, but thousands more stood firm for Jesus Christ and won the martyr's crown. Especially did the bishops and other church leaders feel the fury of the pagans during this wave of horrors, but still imprisoned Christians in Rome could write to their brethren in Africa:

> What more glorious and blessed lot can fall to man by the grace of God, than to confess God the Lord amidst tortures and in face of death itself; to confess Christ the Son of God with lacerated body and with a spirit departing, yet free.[5]

The Emperor Valerian, who reigned from A.D. 253 to 260, tried milder methods to suppress the growth of Christianity, contenting himself with confiscation of property, exile of prominent Christians, and prohibition of religious assem-

[5] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church,* vol. II, p. 61.

blies. But when the milder measures failed to work, he ordered the execution of all clergy and laymen of high rank who would not abjure their faith. Among the most famous of this new crop of martyrs was Cyprian of Carthage, whose trial before the Roman proconsul set a new speed record for such proceedings. Asked, "Art thou Thascius Cyprian, the bishop of so many impious men?" and told that, "The most sacred emperor commands thee to sacrifice," Cyprian answered simply, "I will not sacrifice." "Consider well," cautioned the proconsul. "Execute your orders," replied Cyprian, "the case admits no consideration."

The resulting sentence reveals the grounds on which the pagans condemned the followers of Christ; certainly the terse statements contained therein leave little to the imagination. It reads:

> Thascius Cyprian, thou hast lived long in impiety, and assembled around thee many men involved in the same wicked conspiracy. Thou hast shown thyself an enemy alike to the gods and the laws of the empire; the pious and sacred emperors have in vain endeavoured to recall thee to worship of thy ancestors. Since, then, thou hast been the chief author and leader of these most guilty practices, thou shalt be an example to those whom thou hast deluded to thy unlawful assemblies. Thou must expiate thy crime with thy blood.[6]

Cyprian responded, "God be thanked," was hustled into a neighboring field, and beheaded.

The Valerian persecution was followed by a period of forty years of peace, except for the five-year reign (A.D. 270–275) of Aurelian, who was occupied with military campaigns and had little time to attend to the religious interests of the Empire. But toward the close of his reign he issued an edict of persecution, and an extensive blood bath was prevented only by his assassination. Then followed a rapid succession of

[6] Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*, 14, 15.

nine emperors who, for the most part, left the Christians in peace.

During that season of peace the Church grew in numbers and prosperity. Church building could not keep pace with the number of converts. Christians no longer declined offices in government since they were exempted from the customary sacrifice to pagan gods. Even those close to Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284–305), including his wife Prisca and daughter Valeria, were among the converts. The long period of peace, however, brought about a relaxation of morals and worldliness invaded the Church, which was shamed by feuds that sometimes led to open violence. But all this was to be purged by the last and most violent persecution within the Roman Empire.

In the year 303 A.D., the Emperor Diocletian suddenly issued a series of edicts designed to destroy Christianity completely. By these edicts all Christian assemblies were prohibited; all churches were to be demolished; all copies of the Scriptures were to be burned; all Christians who held rank or office were to be degraded; all were to lose their citizenship and be liable to torture. Eusebius, the historian, informs us that the executioners grew weary of the slaughter and their swords became dull and shattered. Even the wild beasts became satiated with the flesh and blood of the martyrs and at last refused to attack the victims. While there were those who, in fear of these edicts, apostatized from the faith, yet, as the persecution grew in intensity and violence, the fidelity of the Christians increased and the martyrs sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God, even to their last breath.

Diocletian retired from public life in the year 305 A.D., but the persecution he had inaugurated continued to rage fiercely in the East under Galerius and Maximinus Daza. The bloodshed failed, however, to achieve its purpose and finally the people grew weary of the incessant slaughter.

Galerius, dying of a loathsome disease, issued an edict of toleration, in which he attempted to justify the bloody reprisals.

> We have up to this time desired to regulate everything according to ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans, and in particular to provide that even the Christians, who had left the religion of their parents, should return to a better mind. . . . But we, in the exercise of our tender clemency, and according to our unceasing custom of extending pardon and indulgence to all men, have come to the conclusion that the most frank and open toleration should be extended to them also, to the effect that they may now again be allowed to be Christians, and gather together in their societies—provided, however, that they take no action against the religion of the State.[7]

Thus the great red dragon confessed defeat; the Lamb was victorious. The Cross proved more powerful than the sword. Even a greater victory was at hand than that of mere toleration, but the edict of Galerius closed the period of persecutions within the Roman Empire.

Kingdom Victories

During the three centuries of persecution, the Church demonstrated to the State that spiritual force is more powerful and lasting than physical force. The Kingdom of Christ cannot be destroyed by material weapons. Carnal power can never vanquish moral power.

Moreover, the Church demonstrated that she did not have to resort to physical power to establish herself or righteousness upon the earth. Under the most adverse circumstances, the Church would influence the life of a pagan empire by remaining faithful to the preaching of the revealed Gospel.

[7] Lactantius, *De Morte Persecutorum*, XXXIV.

The Church resorted to teaching and preaching rather than to using the arm of the State to establish religion and righteousness.

Despots learned that they could not control or rule the Christian conscience. The things of God could not be controlled by Caesar.

Early Christians fought the battle not only for spiritual independence but also for civil liberty. The ancient world was based upon the absolutism of the State, which trampled underfoot the individual rights of men. Unfortunately, the war for the rights of individuals was not won with the terrific battle of the first three centuries; future battles still had to be fought. But in the vanguard for civil liberty is the Church. The victories of the Church inevitably, as history shows, lead to liberty for all men and institutions.

✲ Chapter V ✲

CONSTANTINE, EMPEROR AND BISHOP

A young general tossed restlessly in bed as he tried to formulate plans for battle against a bitter and powerful enemy. At last he fell asleep. In a dream he beheld the shape of a cross and upon it the inscription, *By this sign thou shalt conquer!* Early the next morning, he ordered the pagan eagle standards to be changed for standards of the Christian cross. Constantine and his army went out and conquered the forces of the heathen Maxentius in battle before Rome, and the young general attributed his conquest to the sign of the cross.

With the victory came a revolutionary change in the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Christian Church. Christianity became the preferred religion, and the policy of the Roman Caesars was completely reversed.

We cannot say that this reversal of policy was one of complete blessing to the Church. It marked the beginning of caesaro-papism—the rule of the State over the Church. Yet, there was no deliberate policy on the part of Constantine to dominate the affairs of the Church, as we glean from his humble statement to certain bishops: "God made you the bishops of the internal affairs of the Church, and me the bishop of its external affairs." [1] But the distinction between the internal affairs that belonged to bishops and the external matters that came under the aegis of the emperor was too hazy to prevent one from invading the sphere of the other. It was not long

[1] Lactantius, *op. cit,* XLIV.

before Constantine was definitely influencing the spiritual affairs of the Church, although that was probably not his original intent.

The Edict of Milan

After Constantine's victory at Rome on October 27, 312, he and his eastern colleague Licinius, in January of the following year, issued an edict of religious toleration from the city of Milan. By this edict paganism was disestablished as the state religion and full freedom was given to all other religions, with special preference to Christianity, although it should be noted that Christianity was not at this time established as the State religion. All religions, however, were to be tolerated within the Empire. Because the Edict of Milan is rather remarkable for this period of history, I quote it in part:

> We believe that among the very first things to be settled are what relate to the reverence due the Divinity,—an enactment which may give both to the Christians and to all others free power of following whatever religion each man may have preferred; that whatever of divine there is in the heavenly seat may be pacified and be propitious to us, and to all who set under our authority. . . . We have given free and absolute power to these Christians of exercising their own religion. And as this indulgence has been granted to them, so you understand that a similarly free and unrestricted power is, with a view to the peace of our time, conceded to all others as to their own religion or observance, that each may have the free liberty of the worship which he prefers; for we desire that no religion may have its honour diminished by us.

Evidently Constantine wanted to please whatever deity existed and played it safe by giving freedom of worship to worshipers of all deities. The Edict of Milan allowed every

subject of the Roman Empire to choose whatever religion he preferred. Constantine remained true to this principle of toleration throughout his reign, even though he favored Christianity. Believing that in time heathenism would die out of itself, he abstained from passing any measures against pagan priests or their temples. Unfortunately, this policy of freedom of worship was not followed by his sons and their successors.

Bishop of External Affairs

Among the external affairs with which Constantine concerned himself were the exemption of Christian clergy from military and municipal duty, the emancipation of Christian slaves, legalization of bequests to churches, establishment of civil observance of Sunday, personal financial support of clergy and church building, and the calling of church assemblies and presiding over them. All these things Constantine accomplished in his capacity of "bishop," although he was not baptized until just before his death. Baptism, according to the superstitious teaching of the time, brought about complete expiation of past sins, and the emperor wanted to have as many of them expiated as possible.

There is evidence that Constantine made a real effort to limit himself to the external matters of the Church. When he attended the Church's synods, he left his guards at the door, "seated himself (with the permission of the council) on a low stool in the midst of the hall, and professed himself the minister, not the judge" [2] of its decisions. But the distinction of the internal affairs within the jurisdiction of the bishops and the external affairs belonging to the emperor was soon blurred; it became evident that Constantine was the bishop of bishops and the ruler over matters of the Church.

[2] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 24.

The initiative, however, for civil meddling with internal affairs of the Church came through the clergy rather than the Emperor. It seems that the Church in North Africa was divided into two hostile camps over the question of disciplining those who had apotatized during the Diocletian persecution. The Donatists did not want to receive nor forgive persons who had been cowardly during that time. When they (the Donatists) refused to acknowledge Caecilian as bishop of Carthage because Bishop Felix (who had delivered the sacred Scriptures to be burned at the command of heathen persecutors) performed his ordination service, the controversy came to a head. The divided parties' endeavors to influence the Church to accept their particular viewpoint brought about schism and the Donatists appealed to the Emperor Constantine to settle the issue. Their appeal was the first—and, unfortunately, not the last—appeal to the coercive arm of the State to settle strictly religious matters. The appeal itself recoiled upon the Donatists.

At that time, the emperor was away in Gaul and referred the matter to a committee of bishops, who ruled against the Donatists, as did also a later council. But the Donatists, feeling sure of their cause, appealed directly to the emperor. Not only did he declare against them but he issued penal laws threatening them with exile and confiscation of their churches if they persisted in the schism. Coercion against them began in 316, but Constantine abandoned the use of force in 321 when he saw the futility of forcible restriction of religion.

Similar appeals from contending parties led Constantine to summon the Council of Nicea in the year 325. This dispute, known as the Arian controversy, concerned the Person of Christ. Constantine's concern was not so much the truth regarding the Person of our Saviour but rather that harmony and unity should prevail, for this would have a beneficial effect on the unity of the Empire. Thus his opening address to the Council reflects this concern:

> Discord in the church I consider more fearful and painful than any other war. As soon as I by the help of God can overcome my enemies, I believed that nothing more was now necessary than to give thanks to God in common joy with those whom I had liberated. But when I heard of your division, I was convinced that this matter should by no means be neglected, and in the desire to assist by my service, I have summoned you without delay. I shall, however, feel my desire fulfilled only when I see the minds of all united in that peaceful harmony which you, as the anointed of God, must preach to others. Delay not therefore, my friends, delay not, servants of God; put away all causes of strife, and loose all knots of discord by the laws of peace.

The Council ruled in favor of the orthodox doctrine of the Person of Christ, and only two Bishops, Theonas and Secundus of Egypt, refused to sign the orthodox formula. They were banished by the Emperor, and the books of Arius were ordered burned. Heresy thus was deemed to merit State punishment and such persecution was practiced for centuries. All offenses against the Church were henceforth regarded as crimes against the State. Many centuries were to lapse before civil interference with ecclesiastical internal affairs would cease.

It was Constantine who first introduced into the working of the Church of Christ the principle of employing civil power to enforce what was regarded as truth by the majority of Church officials. And at times it was not the majority who influenced the emperor but those who were his favorites. When Constantine announced that he would be bishop of external affairs of the Church, he intended undoubtedly to limit such civil activities to the financial support of the clergy, donations for church buildings, and calling and presiding over synods. However, his very presence at the synods influenced some of the members who had desired a middle course of action; they feared to oppose the emperor's will.

Fear of offending the civil ruler was augmented by the knowledge that the State gave force of law to the decisions of the synods and would use coercion to see that external obedience was rendered to the ecclesiastical decrees. Whereas in previous centuries the Caesars had regarded themselves as the high priests of the heathen State religion, now the Caesars regarded themselves as the high priests of the Christian religion, endowed with authority to execute its decrees. Caesar was still Pontifex Maximus.

Accepting the coercive power of the State was a major error on the part of the Church, for which she was to pay dearly for more than a millennium. The first three centuries of the Christian era had witnessed a phenomenal growth and influence on the part of the Church, despite State opposition. Now, instead of maintaining her hard-won independence, the Church had allied herself with the State and actually had subjected herself to the will of the emperor. As someone has stated, the Church "served as a gilded crutch of absolutism."

In the year 330, Constantine decided to move the capital of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople in token of its new preeminence. This gave him a better atmosphere to promote Christianity, for paganism still dominated Rome. His move had an important bearing upon Church and State relationships, especially in the East, where rulers continued their prominence in Church affairs for many centuries.

Constantine's Sons

Upon the death of Constantine in 337, the Empire was divided between his three sons—Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius, whose scandalous behavior, alas, did small credit to the Christian education which they had received.

The brothers fought each other for the sole supremacy of the Empire—and Constantine II was slain by Constans, who in turn was murdered by a barbarian field officer. Thus in 353 Constantius became sole emperor.

The policy of toleration, inaugurated by their father, was not followed by the sons, for they determined to root out heathenism by force. Constantine pillaged and destroyed pagan temples and gave the booty to the Church and to his court favorites—and he forbade all sacrifices and worship of images under penalty of death. Pagans now endured the same kind of persecutions which Christians had suffered during the first three centuries of the Christian era.

But Constantine's persecutions did not stop with the pagans. He became a fanatical Arian and set to work to make life miserable for all opponents of that doctrine, which maintained that the Son of God was not eternal but was created by the Father from nothing, as an instrument for the creation of the world; therefore He was not God by nature. This position was diametrically opposed to that laid down by the Council of Nicea, which held to the true deity of Christ, i.e., that He was of the same essence with the Father. Constantius, who considered himself a theologian, persecuted everyone who adhered to the Nicean orthodoxy by confiscating their property and banishing them from the Empire. Hence the emperor's will became, as it were, the canon of the Church.

Theodosius the Great

Although Christianity had been the favored religion within the Empire since Constantine the Great, it did not become the official state religion until the year 380, during the reign of Theodosius the Great, who—in conjunction with his co-rulers, Gratian and Valentinian II—issued an edict establishing Christianity throughout the world by imperial authority:

> We will that all the nations, who are ruled over by our moderation and clemency, shall cultivate and exercise that religion which the divine Apostle Peter originally introduced and has since handed down to the inhabitants of Rome, and which is publicly professed by the Pontiff Damasus and Peter, Bishop of Alexandra.

They then proceeded to define some of the articles of faith and sagely added:

> Those who follow this doctrine we authorize to assume the name of Catholic Christians; and all others, judging them to be senseless and insane, we ordain to bear the infamy of holding heretical dogma; nor must their congregations assume the name of churches. On the contrary, they must expect to be visited, first by the divine vengeance, and then by that also of the authority which we have received from the will of heaven.

Here we see the ultimate in caesaro-papism. The State imposes the Christian faith on all subjects, regardless of their own convictions, with punishment for nonconformity, "first by the divine vengeance, and then by that also of the authority which we have received from the will of heaven."

Theodosius adhered to Nicene orthodoxy, and the State religion was defined under its terms. He proceeded to issue a series of rigid laws against all who differed with what he defined as catholic Christianity: Arians were deprived of their churches and driven out of the Empire; and heathen worship and idolatry were treated as political offenses.

Many of the laws enacted by Christian emperors were compiled in two Codes, and in 435 Theodosius II instructed a commission met for that purpose to codify all general constitutions enacted since the time of Constantine I. Book XVI of what is known as "The Theodosian Code" contains the laws banning paganism and penalizing heresy and also the laws that defined the relationship of Church and State. This

Code was revised and enlarged by Justinian I in 529, when it laid down the fiat that the emperor's will was supreme and thus *ipso facto* justified the control of the State over ecclesiastical affairs. The canons of the Church were given the force of civil law. With this mechanism, we can see that there was almost a complete union of Church and State, with the emperor as legislator and executor of both ecclesiastical and civil laws.

The control of the State over the external, and often internal, affairs of the Church has characterized the subsequent history of the Byzantine or Eastern Church. Greek bishops became more and more subservient to the emperor as time passed, and it may well have been the factor of civil control over spiritual affairs that influenced Czarist Russia to choose Eastern Orthodoxy as the State religion.

The Commingling of Kingdoms

When the Roman Empire became Christian under Constantine, there was no deliberate intention of mixing the functions of Church and State. Nor was there any desire to be intolerant toward either the heathen or heretical parties within the Church itself: what developed was a matter of gradual growth. While external freedom to worship her Saviour was a great blessing to the formerly persecuted Church, she obtained this boon at the expense of her independence.

Responsibility for the loss of that independence must be laid squarely at the door of the Church itself, for it was the Church which first appealed to Caesar to interfere with her internal affairs. The Donatists yielded to the temptation of employing State power to gain ascendancy within the Church, and their example, alas, was followed by other groups.

Voices Raised for Independence

The first to raise a voice against the emperors for their interference with Church matters were the very Donatists whose appeal to the imperial throne had set the kettle boiling. Only after the emperor had decided against *them* did they turn against State control of religion. One Donatist bishop is reported to have complained, "God appointed prophets and fishermen, not princes and soldiers, to spread the faith."

Another protest was raised by Bishop Hosius, whom the Emperor Constantius ordered to turn against the champion of orthodoxy, Athanasius, and to embrace the heresy of Arianism. Writing to the emperor, he said:

> Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands unto us concerning them; but learn them from us. God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us He has entrusted the affairs of his Church; and as he who would steal the empire from you would resist the ordinance of God, so likewise fear on your part lest by taking upon yourself the government of the Church, you become guilty of a great offence. It is written "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Neither therefore is it permitted unto us to exercise an earthly rule, nor have you, Sire, any authority to burn incense. These things I write unto you out of concern for your salvation.[3]

Athanasius relates how a number of bishops were summoned before Emperor Constantius and commanded to subscribe against Athanasius, and to hold communion with heretics. Astonished at this novel procedure, they said to the Emperor that there was no ecclesiastical canon to this effect. Immediately he said, "Whatever I will, be that esteemed a

[3] Athanasius, *A History of the Arians to the Monks*, 44.

Canon; the Bishops of Syria let me thus speak. Either then obey, or go into banishment."[4] The bishops threatened the Emperor with the day of judgment, and warned him against infringing ecclesiastical order, mingling Roman sovereignty with the constitution of the Church, and introducing Arian heresy into the Church of God. And, in turn, *they* were threatened with punishment and exiled.

Bishop Ambrose was another courageous soul who struck out for the independence of the Church. More than once he rebuked Emperor Theodosius. On one such occasion, a dispute in Thessalonica resulted in several imperial officers being wounded. Theodosius in anger ordered an indiscriminate massacre of the citizens there, and 7,000 persons were forthwith slain. Immediately, Ambrose upbraided the Emperor, took him to task for this atrocity, and shut the doors of the Church against him. Theodosius for eight months implored admittance but was refused—when he remonstrated with the bishop, he was told that the Emperor might kill him and pass over his (Ambrose's) body into the sanctuary. Theodosius was spared this unpleasant alternative and at last received absolution after he had done public repentance.

Voices for the independence of the Church were few at best; most of her leaders submitted to the dictates of civil rulers and sought those rulers' favor. Thus, secularization of the Church began, and the strict discipline, zeal, and self-sacrifice of the first three centuries of her existence passed away. Various parties within the Church sought to establish their particular causes, not through the power of truth but through the power of the emperor. And so many centuries were to pass, with many costly sacrifices in the interim, before the Church was fully to recover her independence.

[4] Lynn Harold Hough, *Athanasius: The Hero*, p. 109.

✲ Chapter VI ✲

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

WHAT happened to Rome after Constantine moved the capital of the Empire to Constantinople? Politically, Rome suffered through invasion and sacking by savage hordes of Teutonic "barbarians." Ecclesiastically, the period from 313 to the fall of the Western Empire in 476 witnessed the growth of power and authority on the part of Rome's bishops.

The Conquerors and the Conquered

Shortly after Christianity had become established in the Empire, barbaric tribes broke through and after bitter struggles one of the barbaric chiefs, Odoacer of the Ostrogoths, dethroned the last of the Western emperors in the year 476.

When the conquerors invaded the Roman Empire, they came in contact with Roman life and customs which, though designated as culture, had by this time deteriorated to standards lower than those of the barbarians themselves. On the other hand, the invaders also observed that Roman Christians possessed a higher standard of living than did non-Christians, and this fact made a deep impression upon them. The Teutonic tribes had already learned something about Christianity from Ulfilas and other Christian missionaries who had worked among them many years previously, so that

they were more receptive to Christian teachings than they would otherwise have been. Gradually, all of the German tribes came under the influence of the Christian religion, and thus a greater power than the might of the sword, that of the gospel of Christ, conquered the conquerors.

It was not, however, to the Nicene orthodoxy that the Germanic tribes were converted. Rather were they influenced by Arian missionaries, and the bearing of this on Church-State relationships proved significant indeed. For Arianism recognized no universal organization; its churches were under royal control, and there was no idea of setting up the Church as a society in competition with the State. Arianism also tended toward a national rather than a universal church and so militated against the Catholic pattern of patriarchates centering in the papacy. But the crosscurrents of Arianistic thought were soon swept away—and by the eighth century Arianism had finally disappeared, having gradually lost its influence in the interim.

The Bishops of Rome

After the destruction of the Western Empire in 476, the Emperor at Constantinople became the sole ruler of the world, and the bishop of the capital city was accordingly given special prestige. Though that dignitary considered himself equal (if not superior) to the bishop of Rome, the patriarch, or bishop, of Constantinople remained in subjection to the emperor, who assumed the title "Bishop of Bishops" and from this citadel governed the affairs of the Church. Only the bishops of Rome refused to subject themselves to the control of the Eastern emperor and struggled constantly for the Church's independence. Although the General Council of Chalcedon in 451 voted the Patriarch of Constantinople

as the chief bishop of the entire Church, the bishop of Rome strongly opposed such a state of affairs, and this opposition laid the foundation for the differences which later divided the Church into Roman and Greek divisions, or Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox as we now know them.

A number of factors contributed to the successful dominance of the bishop of Rome over a major portion of the Church. Although Constantinople had become the seat of imperial government, Rome—in the minds of the people—was still considered the capital of the world. Thus, the bishop of Rome, whose congregation was the largest in the world, had considerable prestige from the *location* of his see city alone. Furthermore, the Roman bishops frequently took the side of orthodoxy and fought valiantly against heresies. Roman missionaries added to her reputation and influence, especially among the newly formed churches, where they did true yeoman service. And then there was that strong factor in favor of Rome—the claim that the bishop of Rome was the direct successor of the Apostle Peter and so could lay claim to apostolic power.

Prior to the destruction of the Roman Empire, a dominant personality arose in whom the prestige and authority of the Roman Church was reflected. In Pope Leo the Great, who occupied the papal throne from 440 to 461, the peculiar and inordinate claims of the papacy first found expression. Not only did he claim that the Bishop of Rome was the direct successor of Peter, he further asserted that that dignitary was to be regarded as the vicar or earthly representative of Jesus Christ. He identified the interest of Christianity with the universal dominion of the Roman Church. He performed valiant service for the city of Rome and on at least two occasions succeeded in outtalking invaders who threatened it with the torch. The first of these feats (and they may really be regarded as such) was performed in the year 452, when

Attila, king of the Huns, threatened to destroy the Eternal City. Pope Leo, accompanied by two other churchmen, bravely went to the camp of the heathen king and persuaded Attila to desist from his purpose. Several years later, he performed a similarly brave deed when he persuaded the Vandal king, Genseric, to spare Rome from fire and sword. Naturally, these brave deeds added to the prestige, power, and authority of the Bishop.

Some thirty years later, the independence of the Church from the State was given expression by Pope Gelasius (492–496) in what is known as the "Gelasian Theory," first stated in a letter to the Emperor Anastasius, wherein he claimed the superiority of the ecclesiastical to the civil power and distinguished the separate spheres of activity of Church and State. On the one hand, he wrote, there was a secular realm over which the bishops held sway. Neither power had the right to exercise the rights of the other; yet the religious was superior to the secular and temporal, for bishops were responsible to God for the salvation of the emperor. Thus, in case of a conflict of jurisdiction, the bishop's decision would prevail. Of course, under this theory the Church was able to claim complete jurisdiction over both the secular and temporal realms by judging the moral implications of every human act.

During the sixth and seventh centuries, the popes were active in evangelizing the barbarous races and as a result England, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Scandinavia came under the influence and power of the papacy. During this time, the popes were still the political subjects of the Eastern Emperor and could not be consecrated without his consent. To be independent from the emperor at Constantinople became a necessary step in the development of the absolute papacy and by the eighth century, through the rise of the Frankish Empire, victory was effected.

The Papal Alliance with the Franks

During the reign of Pope Gregory II (715–731), the Lombards conquered Italy. Now the popes were in real trouble, for to be subject to a barbarian king on the home front was far more distasteful to them than being subject to the emperor in far-distant Constantinople. So they looked for deliverance to the Franks, who were a rising power beyond the Alps. The Franks were Catholic rather than Arian, and it seemed more likely that they would yield to the influence of the papacy, a faith fully justified when Frank military power under Charles Martel saved Christian Europe from the invasion of Islam. Seeing in this Charles Martel a likely champion and deliverer, Pope Gregory III (731–741) commenced negotiations with him to drive the Lombards from Italy. The Pope was not successful in this attempt—although Martel treated him with the utmost courtesy, he refused to cross the Alps and drive out the Lombards.

After the death of both Gregory III and Charles Martel, Pope Zacharias (741–752) implored the protection of Martel's son, Pepin the Short. Like his father, Pepin had only the title of "Mayor of the Palace," a term denoting the prime minister of the sovereign—nevertheless, he was virtual ruler of the realm, the real power behind the throne. In return for such aid as he might be able to furnish, Pope Zacharias assisted him in gaining the actual crown of France. Boniface, the apostle of Germany and archbishop of Mayence, first anointed Pepin with holy oil—two years later, the pope repeated the coronation ceremony, an act that was made the basis for a claim of papal superiority over the crown of France and Germany. Elevation of Pepin to the throne of France was the first step in the creation of the Holy Roman Empire: of this Empire the emperor was the civil head and the pope the spiritual head.

On several occasions after this, the pope commanded Pepin —in the names of St. Peter and the Holy Mother of God—to save Rome from its enemies (namely, the Lombards) and promised him glorious mansions in heaven as a reward. Pepin heeded his behest, defeated the Lombards and donated the conquered lands to the pope—a fair exchange for celestial real estate, it would seem.

This donation of Pepin became the foundation of what is commonly called the States of the Church, or the Patrimony of St. Peter, and it made the pope a temporal prince with power over a great part of Italy. For, prior to Pepin's beneficence, Constantine had given the Church the right to hold real estate and to receive property from various individuals. Dante, seeing the evil and baneful influence that such wealth had upon the papacy, might well thus write:

> Oh, Constantine! of how much ill was mother,
> Not thy conversion, but that marriage-dower
> Which the first wealthy Father took from thee.[1]

Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire

To unite all the Teutonic and Latin races on the Continent then under the sovereignty of the emperor in close alliance with the spiritual dominion of the papacy was the great ambition of Charlemagne (768–814). Rome's long supremacy over all races had conditioned the people to the idea of a universal empire in conjunction with a universal state religion, and this idea found at least partial fulfillment in the Holy Roman Empire set up by Charlemagne, one of the truly great figures of history. The Empire was Christendom. While the emperor was to reign supreme in the secular realm and the pope in the spiritual, the Middle Ages witnessed a tremendous and bitter struggle between emperor and pope to obtain supremacy in both realms.

[1] *Inferno,* xix. 113–118.

Just as his father, Pepin the Short, had done, Charlemagne protected Rome from the Lombards. He succeeded in forcing King Desiderius to retire to a monastery and himself assumed the Lombard crown. He enlarged Pepin's gift to the pope and was known by the title *Patricius Romanorum*. In the year 799, a terrible riot broke out in Rome in which Pope Leo was almost killed—he called upon Charlemagne for help, and the latter protected him. The following year, Charlemagne crossed the Alps to investigate certain charges of crime against the pope. When no witnesses appeared, Pope Leo publicly read a declaration of his innocence and on Christmas Day of that year, there occurred an event which was to have political and ecclesiastical consequences for many centuries to come, namely, the coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III as "Emperor of the Romans."

The significance of this coronation became a matter of debate throughout and after the Middle Ages. Did this signify, as later popes claimed, that the papacy had the power to make and unmake kings and emperors? Did the Church possess secular as well as spiritual power over the lives of its peoples? Charlemagne, by both his words and deeds, clearly indicated that he considered himself to be the divinely appointed protector of, and ruler over, the external and, to some extent, internal affairs of the Church. He, at least, did not recognize in the pope a superior authority and power who could dictate to him how to rule the Empire.

Charlemagne regarded it as his prerogative to rule the Church no less than the State. Bishops received their appointments to office from him and so were under his control. He called the meetings of synods and presided over them without consulting the pope. He took active part in doctrinal controversies, as seen in his condemnation of the Adoption theory with the pope's approval and his rejection of image worship in the face of the pope's opposition. Church discipline was restored, and many reforms were adopted under his direction.

Not only did he defend the Church against her enemies but compelled his own subjects to accept the Catholic faith and to obey the discipline of that Church. Furthermore, he was instrumental in bringing about a unified liturgy and in encouraging education. Although he used a firm hand over the affairs of the Church, and his authority in this field was unquestioned, he brought about a needed reformation among the clergy.

The mind, the spirit, and the authority of Charlemagne are reflected in his great lawbook titled *Capitularia.* The assemblies which he called to consider the affairs of the Empire enacted both civil and ecclesiastical laws. It is actually difficult to distinguish between civil and church assemblies, as there was an intermingling between secular and religious affairs. One finds in the *Capitularia* such spiritual penalties as excommunication attached to the breaking of political laws and secular punishments for spiritual offenses. Observance of Sunday is enjoined, moral lessons are introduced, the marriage tie is protected, consultation of soothsayers is forbidden, prayer is advocated along with political and civil legislation. The laws, both civil and canon, were passed only as approved by the emperor and duly executed by him. Charlemagne was indeed ruler over Christendom.

After his death in 814, we find a century and a half of confusion. Weak emperors and powerless popes succeeded one another, and the result was feudalism, where power passed into the hands of the barons and bishops.

In 962, Otto the Great halted this trend, regained power over Church and State, and, upon being crowned "Emperor of the Romans" by the pope, promised to protect the Holy See and the city of Rome. The pope, on the other hand, acknowledged his secular subjection to the emperor—i.e., that the papal office could not be filled without the emperor's consent. The arrangement was of benefit to both the Roman Catholic Church, which was in danger of dividing into na-

tional churches, and to the Empire, which was in danger from the disintegrating tendencies of feudalism. But during this period, the papacy sank to low moral degradation, and several times it was the emperor who, following the example of Charlemagne, proved the reforming power. Henry III (1039–1056), for example, managed to depose three rival popes and elected a worthy German bishop to the high office. Thus the Empire was supreme within Christendom and the Church became its obedient servant. The State ruled the Church.

Summary

The period from 313 to 1056 which we have briefly surveyed witnessed the development of the authority of the bishops and, gradually, the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome over the Western Church. The ancient Roman Empire weakened; and its final fall was brought about by the invasion of Germanic tribes. The Roman Church, chiefly by its missionary efforts, was the most powerful element in reshaping the age. But the papacy turned away from reliance on God and from the power of the Gospel and sought political alliance with the Franks in order to achieve its own ends. Consequently, through this alliance the papacy obtained large tracts of land which gave the pope temporal as well as spiritual power: in payment for this acquisition, the Church gave up much of its independence and became secularized. The State retained, in both lesser and greater degree, authority over the Church throughout the period.

Ignorance, superstition, and crime mark the tenth and eleventh centuries, which are deservedly termed the Dark Ages. The lives of the popes, with but few exceptions, were stained by adultery, unnatural vices, murder, theft, simony, and other immoralities. This was the period when three

women of high rank, Theodora and her two daughters, filled the chair of St. Peter with their paramours and bastards. Even Roman Catholic historians acknowledge the degradation of the papacy at this time in history. The Church's alliance with and reliance on the State brought forth evil fruits.

In spite of the spiritual darkness and moral degradation, people continued to regard as legitimate and ideal the concept of one Church and State under the absolute authority of pope and emperor. The people were neither concerned with nor did they dream of such a thing as *representative* rights.

✲ Chapter VII ✲

THE TRIPLE CROWN

A familiar sight to those who behold the pope on ceremonial occasions is the Triregnum or the Triple Crown. The three circlets of this papal headdress possess symbolical significance, namely, the Roman pontiff's spiritual supremacy, his temporal dominion, and his claim of sovereignty over all rulers. The realization of this symbolic crown was a matter of slow and painful development.

The first circlet is symbolic of the absolute authority the pope claims and exercises over all spiritual matters of the whole Roman Catholic Church. After the middle of the fifth century, the Church had five patriarchs—with seats in Alexandria, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Constantinople, and Rome. For a time the Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople were rivals for Church supremacy. But the Bishop of Rome, having succeeded and so become the head of the Western Church, based his sovereignty upon an alleged divine right of absolute control, conferred by Christ upon St. Peter and upon all of his successors, the bishops of Rome.

Temporal Prince

The second circlet is symbolic of the pope's authority over that part of Italy commonly called the States of the Church, or the Patrimony of St. Peter. We have already noted

that Pepin and Charlemagne, after driving out the Lombards in northern Italy, gave these territories to the popes as temporal princes. The papacy sought to bolster its temporal sovereignty with a spurious document called the *Donation of Constantine,* which was included in the pseudo-Isidorian decretals. This forged document affirms that Constantine, when he moved the capital to Constantinople, made over to the Bishop of Rome, in perpetual sovereignty, "Rome, Italy, and all the provinces of the West." This forgery greatly aided the popes in making good their claim to temporal sovereignty and was not proved false until the latter part of the fifteenth century.

The history of the temporal sovereignty of the papacy has little to commend it, and the power thereof worked to the disintegration of the spiritual character of the popes, to say nothing of their loyalty to Christian ideals. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Italian unity, province after province of the States of the Church ranged themselves under the Kingdom of Italy, and in 1870 King Victor Emmanuel II conquered the City of Rome and reunited Italy into one kingdom, leaving only the palaces and grounds of the Vatican in possession of the Papacy. The popes chose to consider themselves prisoners until 1929, when the Lateran Treaty was signed with Mussolini. This treaty gave the papacy a territory of some 108 acres, over which the pope rules as a temporal monarch.

Sovereign Over States

The third circlet of the Triregnum is symbolic of the papal claim of sovereignty over all earthly rulers and governments. It expresses the right to interfere authoritatively in the regulation of civil and secular affairs. The extent of this interference varies and has changed with circumstances, but

Roman Catholic policy, though flexible in practice, has ever remained firm in maintaining the dogma of temporal supremacy over the affairs of nations. It is held that the relation of Church and State is similar to that of the soul to the body. As the soul has ascendancy over the body, so the Church (meaning the Roman Church) has ascendancy over the State. As the soul directs the body in its many activities, so does the Church direct the activities of the State.

The claim of direct power over the affairs of the State came dramatically to the fore during the reign of Pope Gregory VII, who occupied the papal throne from 1073 to 1085. He was the first pope to claim and exercise the power of deposing an emperor and absolving that sovereign's subjects from their oaths and obligations to him. The contest concerning investiture brought this issue to a head.

After the death of Charlemagne, in the absence of a strong central government, the feudal system developed. Any landlord who succeeded in protecting his lands and property was regarded as a community leader. People signed over the control of their land to him in return for protection and became serfs or vassals. The estate was known as a fief. In time, powerful lords ruled over large tracts of land but at the same time were subject to a king or emperor. The Church became involved in the feudal system through ownership of large areas of land. As these lands became feudalized, many churchmen, now temporal princes, owed allegiance, service, and taxes to the emperor as well as to the pope. Otto the Great, for example, donated large estates to the Church and elevated certain bishops to feudal lordships. When the bishop died, the emperor had the privilege of appointing his successor through imperial *investiture.* This ceremony consisted of giving the new Church officer a pastoral staff and an episcopal ring, which symbolized both spiritual and temporal jurisdictions. The right of investiture, insuring the subjection of

Church officials to the emperor, stood in the way of papal absolute supremacy as envisioned by Pope Gregory.

The son of a carpenter, Gregory VII began his career as the monk Hildebrand. From 1049 to 1073, he was both the maker and the adviser of popes and from 1073 to 1085 he himself held the papal chair. His conception of the papal office was amazingly grandiose, as brought to light in his work *Dictatus Papae,* which defines the papal position in 27 affirmations. Among the most arrogant of these are the somewhat startling theorems that:

> He [i.e., the Pope] alone may use the imperial insignia; his feet only shall be kissed by all princes; he may depose the emperors; he himself may be judged by no one; the Roman Church has never erred, nor will it err in all eternity; the Roman Pontiff may absolve subjects from their allegiance to wicked men.

Gregory's papal position was to come into deadly conflict with the established procedure of the emperors—and the issue of the right of investiture was, so to speak, the "first shot" fired in this conflict.

According to prevalent practice, Henry IV made an appointment to the Archbishopric of Milan. A few months previous, in the spring of 1075, a synod at Rome, admittedly under the influence of Gregory VII, forbade investiture by lay authority. Gregory seized this opportunity to take Henry IV to task for not only this particular appointment but for some other episcopal appointments made by that unlucky gentleman as well. Henry, after consulting a number of his German nobles and bishops, retaliated by denouncing Gregory as "not pope, but false monk" and demanding that he resign his papal office. Thereupon, Gregory deposed Henry by decree and forbade anyone among his subjects to serve him as king. The pope thus asserted the claim to direct civil power by attempting to dethrone the mighty ruler of Western Christendom.

Some of Henry's enemies invited the pope to preside over an assembly to be held in Augsburg. En route there, Gregory stopped at the fortress of Canossa. To forestall any possible unfriendly action in Augsburg, Henry IV hastened to Canossa and for three days stood barefoot in the snows of winter, pleading for mercy and absolution, a boon which Gregory finally granted upon Henry's solemn vow to conform to the pope's judgments. This picture of King Henry's abject submission at Canossa remains a vivid illustration of papal power, even though Henry later obtained revenge by driving the mighty Gregory into exile, where he died in 1085.

The investiture conflict between emperor and pope continued for some time, but was finally settled by compromise at the Concordat of Worms in 1112. The right of spiritual investiture by ring and staff was deemed to belong to the pope, but investiture in temporalities was to be received by the touch of the emperor's scepter. Thus was an attempt made to distinguish between spiritual and secular kingdoms.

Further advance in the domain of papal claims to direct temporal power was made by Pope Innocent III (1198–1216). He was the first pope to employ the term "Vicar of Christ," and maintained that he was "below God but above man, the judge of all men and judged by none." [1] He claimed to be the general arbiter of differences between rulers and nations and, as such, the guardian of the peace. He based this right to interfere in secular affairs upon his duty to control the moral conduct of earthly rulers and upon the theory of papal feudal overlordship. That justice and peace would prevail upon the earth through papal arbitration proved to be a popular idea with the people of that time.

To bring about "peace," Innocent discarded moral suasion and developed the interdict as a moral, economic, and political weapon. By interdict, subjects were released from their oaths of allegiance to their rulers; churches could be closed;

[1] *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. VI, p. 3.

no bell could be rung, no marriage celebrated, no burial ceremony performed; only the sacraments of Baptism and Extreme Unction could be administered. The telling force of this weapon is seen in the case of Pope Innocent declaring King John deposed from the throne of England, whereupon the king in terror agreed to recognize Innocent as feudal lord over both England and Ireland. By such actions, papal power, symbolized by the Triregnum, rose to its greatest height.

Weakening of the Triregnum

Boniface VIII (1294–1303) continued the policy of his predecessors and attempted to maintain absolute power over both souls and bodies of men—if anything, his claims were even more arrogant and extravagant than those of either Gregory VII or Innocent III. In the midst of celebrating Jubilee, in the year 1300, he sat on the imperial throne, crowned with the Triregnum, girded with the secular sword, and thundered, "I am Caesar; I am Emperor." The famous Bull, *Unam sanctam,* reveals his views on Church and State:

> The spiritual and the material sword are both in the power of the Church, but the former is to be used by the Church, the latter only for it. The former is in the hand of the priest; the latter is no doubt in the hand of the monarch and the soldier, but it is to be used at the pontiff's beck and will: the one sword must be subject to the other, the temporal to the spiritual.

But Boniface failed to take into account the substantial growth of national feeling that had taken place in the latter part of the thirteenth century and so did not get his way with either Edward I of England or Philip the Fair of France, despite interdict and bulls of excommunciation. He attempted to prohibit the two countries from taxing the Church

and clergy for military purposes, which were very much to the fore at that time—and was confronted by the proverbial stone wall. Neither monarch gave way; and both asserted the independence of the secular power in its own sphere. The struggle came to a head in 1303, when Philip of France endeavored to bring the pope to trial. A band of mercenaries took the pope prisoner, but Italian troops released him after three days. A month after this trying experience Pope Boniface died in Rome.

Thus Philip the Fair, endowed with a bold and enterprising spirit, convinced Europe that it was possible to set bounds to the arrogant temporal claims of the Roman pontiff. Gradually but surely, European kings and princes asserted their civil rights with dignity and success and excluded the popes from all interference in their civil transactions. In practically every country of Europe, the tendency of events brought about the centralization of government and increased the power of the reigning monarchs. France, England, Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Burgundy—all became distinguished by their own individual national languages and characteristics, and by steadily increasing differences of habits and institutions. All this eventually gave rise to national churches, over which kings—not the pope—asserted their supremacy.

Papal civil and religious power was further weakened during the "Babylonian captivity" of the papacy in the fourteenth century. In 1309, Pope Clement V, a Frenchman who had promised to support the French State, transferred the papal court to Avignon. There is no doubt that the seventy years' residence of the popes in France greatly impaired the authority of the papacy which, for the most part, was manifestly subservient to French interests. Many European nations did not pay nearly as much heed to the decrees and thunders of the French popes as they had previously paid to those of the Roman pontiffs.

The heavy financial burdens imposed by the papacy also created resentment and rebellion on the part of the nations against the Roman Church. The inferior clergy strengthened this resentment by squandering, in gratification of their lusts and passions, the wealth that had been set apart for religious and charitable purposes. To obtain money for the support of the papal court, the sale of indulgences was encouraged. All bishops, archbishops, and cardinals were required to send to Rome one third of their year's income, and this flow of gold to Rome provoked reaction against the papal authority.

The decline of virtue, evident both at the papal court and in the lives of the lower clergy, was attended by a loss of public esteem and respect. A great part of the clergy became, through their own sloth and ignorance, greed and avarice, lusts and passions, levity and vice, utterly contemptible in the judgment of the multitude. Papal rule over Church and State now invoked disgust, whereas at first it had attracted the common people who, in their trusting ignorance, felt that the supreme spiritual power would govern for the general welfare of mankind. Disappointed by the corruption of the holy office, the populace sought refuge in despotic power. The human spirit, dulled by centuries of domination, was prostrating itself before the throne of authority. Not until after the Reformation was the spirit of man and the individual conscience to be freed.

The growth of imperial power over the Church was enhanced by the defense of several outstanding theologians and philosophers of the fourteenth century. In 1325 a book entitled *Defensor Pacis,* written by Marsilius of Padua, appeared in defense of civil power as against papal power. The Church, according to his viewpoint, was to confine herself to the spiritual welfare of mankind and to become more democratic in government; and the State, under the sovereign, was to possess authority over clergy and Church. This theory

of State control over the Church was also advocated by William of Ockham (1280—1349), the most influential theologian of his time. He advocated a radical separation of the Church from the world, denied the pope all temporal authority, conceded large powers to the laity, and maintained that in all secular matters the Church and the pope were subordinate to the State. These teachings had tremendous influence in the European universities. They transferred the rights of the individual away from the Church and her pontiff to the State and its sovereign.

The clashes of the popes with the kings and other temporal rulers, the growth of nationalism, the "Babylonian captivity," the burden of financial support of the church, the immortality of the clergy, the defense of civil power by the theologians—all weakened the Triple Crown. Absolute spiritual power over the Church deteriorated; power over Italian lands was challenged; and direct power over the internal affairs of nations was drastically curtailed. Yet to this day the papacy has not set aside the Triple Crown nor relinquished the ideal of triple power over the souls and bodies of men.

✲ Chapter VIII ✲

LIBERTY'S PIONEER

THE claim that John Calvin was the founder of America undoubtedly sounds rather startling and puzzling indeed to the average American citizen. Yet such was the claim of the famous German historian, Leopold von Ranke, who wrote: "John Calvin was the virtual founder of America."[1] This claim received support from the great American historian, George Bancroft, who stated, "He that will not honor the memory, and respect the influence of Calvin, knows but little of the origin of American liberty." As to Calvin's place of residence, Bancroft wrote,

> The genius of Calvin infused enduring elements into the institutions of Geneva, and made it for the modern world the impregnable fortress of popular liberty, the fertile seedplot of democracy.[2]

To add one more testimony from the many that could be chosen, Philip Schaff, church historian, wrote:

> The principles of the Republic of the United States can be traced thro' the intervening link of Puritanism to Calvinism, which, with all its theological rigor, has been the chief educator of manly characters and promoter of constitutional freedom in modern times.[3]

Despite so great a cloud of expert witnesses who have been trained to trace historical movements, the prevailing concep-

[1] Quoted by E. W. Smith, *The Creeds of Presbyterians,* p. 119.
[2] *Literary and Historical Miscellanies,* pp. 405ff.
[3] *The Creeds of Christendom,* vol. I, pp. 218–219.

tion seems to be that Calvin was a foe to liberty and that he established in Geneva a theocracy in which he retained for himself dictatorial powers. This notion simply does not conform to historical facts and its prevalence can only be attributed to enemies of Calvinism or to careless writers who have not consulted primary sources for their opinions. A brief glance at the history of Geneva and Calvin's relation to the city's government will explode this fallacious concept and vindicate the judgment of so many outstanding historians.

Geneva Pre-Calvin

For several centuries, the nominal head of Geneva was the bishop, but in 1285 Amadeus V of Savoy compelled the bishop to accept as his second in command a member of the house of Savoy. From that time henceforth, the house of Savoy was represented in Geneva by a personage who was known as the *vidomne.* The bishop, head of the Church in the city, was at the same time the "prince of Geneva." He was the head of the army, issued coinage, imposed taxes, and was the final judge in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs. The *vidomne,* second only to the bishop, watched over the city's safety, guarded prisoners, and executed sentences pronounced by the courts. At times, however, the *vidomne* assumed greater authority.

In time, his seizure of power became so flagrant that, in the fourteenth century, the bishop—groaning under the usurpation of his power by the house of Savoy—appealed for assistance to the citizens of the municipality, and obtained said aid under an agreement which took the name of the "Franchises." This code secured in some degree liberties for the citizens and a measure of self-government. Both the bishop and the Duke of Savoy had to swear to respect the Franchises. Out of all this came the formation of a body

known as the Council of Two Hundred, who were chosen by the citizens of Geneva.

Thus, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, there were three powers very much in evidence in Geneva: the bishop, the *vidomne* who represented the Duke of Savoy, and the Council of Two Hundred.

Many of the bishops who ruled over Geneva had little or no interest in the spiritual, moral, or material welfare of its citizens. The last to hold office, one Pierre de la Baume, lived a life of debauchery so flagrant that on one occasion the people stepped in and forced him to give up a young woman whom he had forcibly ravished. But little interested in Geneva actually, he surrendered his temporal rights to the citizens, willingly enough it would seem, but later changed his mind. When the Council ordered the citizens to take no notice of this change of front, the Archbishop of Vienna excommunicated the city of Geneva and invited the Duke of Savoy to punish it.

The Genevans issued a decree disowning the authority of the pope, expelled the bishop, and declared the see of Geneva vacant. The city appealed to the neighboring Protestant canton of Berne to assist in its resistance and with this aid was saved and became a self-governing republic.

The Bernese troops gave the Genevans their first opportunity of hearing a Reformed preacher. In 1532, William Farel preached Reformed doctrine with the end result of creating a Reformed party. After much conflict and violence between this party and the Roman Catholics, the Council in August of 1535 decided officially in favor of the Reformed faith. On May 21, 1536, the people gathered in St. Peter's Church and were asked by an official of the Council if they were willing to live in accordance with the Gospel and the Word of God, and to do away with masses, images, idols, and all papal abominations. Without one protesting voice, the people accepted evangelical religion and ceased to be Romanists.

The Absence of Liberty

All of the above happenings took place before Calvin arrived in Geneva, and readers who would understand correctly his relation to that city and his contribution to both religious and political liberty must take cognizance of a number of facts.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the absolute State was in the process of replacing the absolute Church. Liberty of the individual, either political or religious, was unknown. The human spirit still prostrated itself before authority and the individual conscience unquestioningly accepted tyranny, be it of Church or of State.

It was Geneva's Council of Two Hundred which formally adopted the Reformed faith, expelled the bishop, and abolished Roman Catholic practices. It was this same Council which assumed the bishop's power over Church and State. Prior to the Council's action, the Church ruled the State through the bishop, but afterwards the State ruled the Church through the Council. And the Council, assuming both civil and ecclesiastical authority, had no intention whatsoever of yielding this dual control.

This abrupt reversal of authority was essentially political. To rid the city of the bishop's civil power, the Council had to dismiss him as the ecclesiastical head of Geneva. Neither the Council nor the citizens embraced the Reformation because they understood Reformation principles; their immediate concern was to maintain temporal liberty against the bishop and the Duke of Savoy.

Uniformity in religious belief and practice, it should be remembered, was considered an essential principle of government. Centuries of habit had ingrained the thought that all citizens are members of the Christian Church and subject to discipline—sin against the Church was a sin against the State, and vice versa. The distinction between Church and

State and their mutually exclusive spheres of jurisdiction were not recognized anywhere in Europe in the days of Calvin.

The reader must constantly keep in mind, moreover, the atmosphere that existed over four hundred years ago—an atmosphere in which individual liberty did not exist. Either the Church or the State, or a combination of the two, dictated what an individual should believe and how he should live.

Calvin's Problems

When Calvin arrived at Geneva in August 1536, he was confronted not only by a medieval conception of Christian society but by problems created by the sudden transition of a Roman Catholic community into that of a Protestant group. From a Roman Catholic city dominated by an ecclesiastical authority, Geneva became Protestant under the rule of a Council which had had no experience in dealing with ecclesiastical affairs. No organized church existed—the chaos that resulted from the transition bordered on anarchy.

Calvin was practically ignored as he began his ministry in Geneva. The secretary of the Council was so unfamiliar with the preacher's name that he designated him in the Register as "that Frenchman." Although the Council agreed to provide for his maintenance, it was not until the following year that Calvin received any remuneration. Then, too, he got scant cooperation in his attempts to organize the church. The Council of Two Hundred, having freed itself from the power of the Roman hierarchy, was determined to keep ecclesiastical matters strictly under its control. There was no thought of yielding any power, in either the ecclesiastical or the civil domain, to "that Frenchman" or any other Reformed preacher.

Not only was Calvin confronted by the Council, jealous of its newly acquired prerogatives, but he was also faced by a people who had practically no knowledge of the Scriptures. Priests for decades had taken no pains to instruct them in the rudiments of the Gospel and as a consequence the people were sunk in ignorance.

Priests added to their remission of fulfilling their teaching mission by setting a woeful example of unbelievable wickedness before the people. Priests and friars debauched married women and abused their husbands when they protested at this state of affairs. Monasteries were places of practically public prostitution. Encouraged and inspired by such wanton examples, the people also engaged in adultery, drunkenness, reckless gambling, blasphemy, and other terrible vices. Prostitution was actually sanctioned by the authority of the State. Public and private dances were followed by bacchanalian orgies. The frivolous people, of course, had no intention of being deprived of their beloved vices. What was permitted under the bishop's rule, they fully expected to practice, even after having professed to accept the Gospel. But they were in for a rude awakening.

Calvin's Warfare

To establish an independent church and to mold the Genevans into a righteous Christian community seemed an impossible task to John Calvin. Yet, without material means or political influence and beginning without a shred of ecclesiastical power, he did create a church that was largely independent, a well-regulated community, and a State zealous to render obedience to the laws of God. His only weapons were moral and spiritual.

Calvin's most powerful weapon was the Word of God. From the day he began his ministry in Geneva, his emphasis was on the exposition of the Scripture. He lectured and preached

from the Word every day. The transformation of Geneva could not have been accomplished without this constant emphasis on preaching and on teaching the Word of God. Within three months of his arrival, he and Farel drew up a "Confession of Faith" which defined the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel and showed the relation of such dogma to proper standards of conduct. It was as the Genevans acquired knowledge of God's Word and allowed it to influence their behavior that they made of their city a New Jerusalem from which the Gospel emanated to penetrate Europe, Great Britain, and the New World.

A blow for the liberty of the pulpit was another achievement of Calvin in connection with preaching. In defending a magistrate who had been falsely accused of treason, Corault, a blind preacher, proclaimed among other startling statements that Geneva was a realm of tipplers governed by drunkards. The Council ordered him to keep silence and passed a general resolution that preachers must keep strictly to their texts. While Corault may have used more vehemence than tact, an important principle was at stake. If ministers were to preach or keep silence at the dictation of civil magistrates, they would run the risk of being unfaithful to their sacred trust. So Calvin refused to give obedience to the decree of the Council and encouraged his colleagues to ignore it also. This situation resulted in tension between him and the magistrates, who were at that time looking for a pretext to drive him from the city.

Then the independence of the church became involved in the question of discipline and the service of the Holy Communion. Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith,* which the Council had approved, stated that excommunication is "a holy and wholesome thing" and therefore that it was

> expedient that all manifest idolaters, blasphemers, murderers, thieves, seditious persons, strikers and drunkards, after they have been duly admonished, if they amend

> not, should be separated from the communion of the faithful, till their repentance has become apparent.

The *Confession,* however, did not clearly specify by whom excommunication was to be administered. The Council claimed that, as the highest court in the city, it had supreme jurisdiction over sacred as well as civil matters. The ministers claimed that spiritual rather than temporal matters were at stake and that, therefore, the only court which had the right to pronounce sentence of excommunication was a court of the church.

The question of jurisdiction was hotly debated not only by the Council and the pastors but also by the man in the street. By this time, many citizens resented the application of gospel principles to their daily life and were led in this opposition by a party known as Libertine. In the annual election of the Council, held in February 1538, the group chosen was predominantly Libertine. Encouraged by this success, the people insulted Calvin on the street and at nightfall serenaded him with vile songs. The matter came to a head when the Council, bent on making a show of their authority, decreed that the ministers must follow the Bernese custom of serving unleavened bread in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—if they refused to do this, they were to be interdicted from the pulpit. Calvin indicated that he would not take instruction from the Bernese in this matter and on the following Sunday, in the midst of great popular excitement, both Calvin and Farel refused to serve communion on the ground that those who partake of that Sacrament must be at peace with one another. This pronouncement resulted in a near riot. The next day, the Council met, formally deposed Farel and Calvin for contempt of lawful authority, and banished them from the city of Geneva.

Thus the stand for independence of the Church in spiritual matters resulted in a dismal failure.

Fortunately, the departure of the Reformers did not lessen the city's zeal for the cause of the Reformation, at least in regard to Roman Catholicism. But the Council was unable to maintain order. Riots, gambling, drunkenness, indecent dancing, adultery, and other vices increased rapidly. In answer to complaints that people were running around the streets naked, singing indecent songs, and blaspheming God, the Council passed regulation after regulation calculated to remedy the situation. Since Calvin's name is often linked with stringent regulations, it is interesting to note here that strict laws were enacted during his absence and indeed many were made decades before his appearance on the scene. Calvin merely made these regulations effective and by the aid of the Gospel cleansed the lives of the citizens.

Because of chaotic conditions that resulted both from the Reformers' absence and the blunders of the anti-Reform party, sentiment turned in favor of Calvin and toward the end of the year 1540 he was invited to return. But he was happy in Strasbourg and had no desire to return to the aggravations of the city by the lake. "I should prefer a hundred other deaths rather than this cross on which I should have to die a thousand times a day," he wrote to Farel in answer to the latter's plea that he return. Finally, driven by a sense of duty, he reentered Geneva on September 13, 1541.

On the first day of his return, Calvin attended a meeting of the Council and asked for a committee to draw up a constitution for the church, concerning which he later wrote to a friend,

> In the first place, we had to see about getting the ecclesiastical laws written. Six of the Council were appointed to assist us in drawing them up. We finished the work in twenty days, and although it is not perfect it is tolerable, considering the state of the times. It was accepted by the popular vote. Then a court was appointed to exercise a censorship of morals and to watch over the order

> of the Church, for I was anxious, as was right, that the spiritual power should be distinguished from the temporal jurisdiction.[4]

The document resulting from these labors, known as *Ecclesiastical Ordinances,* formed the fundamental church law of Geneva and its essential principles have passed into the Confessions of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches throughout the world, although the *Ordinances* were not all that Calvin had hoped for, as reflected in his statement that, "Although it is not perfect it is tolerable, considering the state of the times." The Council, though in a measure cooperative, was unwilling to relinquish entirely its control over church affairs.

The *Ordinances* defined the four regular orders of officials appointed by Christ for the benefit of his Church as pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons. The pastor's duty was stated as being "to preach the Word of God, to instruct, to admonish, to exhort and reprove in public and private, to administer the sacraments, and, with the presbyters, to pronounce the ecclesiastical censures."

The pastors of Geneva and the adjoining country districts formed what was termed "The Venerable Company," a purely clerical body which made no pretense of jurisdiction in civil affairs. Since Calvin has often been accused of setting up a theocracy (in the sense of clergy dominating civil affairs), one cannot emphasize enough that the Venerable Company had no political power, nor did it seek to exercise such power. The influence of these pastors came about through their preaching and their holiness of life.

Another important organization set up by Calvin was the Consistory (Presbytery), a body formed of five pastors and twelve elders. The institution of the Consistory offered the occasion for Calvin's stiffest battle with the Council, even though he arranged for a predominance of laymen in its

[4] A. L. Herminjard, *Correspondence des Réformateurs,* vol. 7, p. 408.

membership. Its actual composition was not entirely according to the ideas of the Reformer, whose conception is to be found in his *Institutes:*

> For as no city or town can exist without a magistracy and civil polity; so the Church of God . . . stands in need of a certain spiritual polity; which, however, is entirely distinct from civil polity, and is so far from obstructing or weakening it, that, on the contrary, it highly conduces to its assistance and advancement. This power of jurisdiction, therefore, will, in short, be no other than an order instituted for the preservation of the spiritual polity.[5]

In writing to the ministers of Zurich in 1553, he stated that

> The Consistory has no civil jurisdiction, but only the right to reprove according to the Word of God, and its severest punishment is excommunication.[6]

Calvin, therefore, drew a clear line of distinction between the civil magistrate, whose authority was confined to the secular realm, and the ruling elder, whose sphere was spiritual. He firmly maintained that the Church had no power to use the sword, to punish, nor to coerce. But he could not persuade the Council to accept all his ideas. The Council would not allow the Church to choose the elder, nor would it allow a minister to preside over the Consistory. Furthermore, the Council refused to accept Calvin's strong recommendation that the Consistory have the power of excommunication. This was purely a spiritual weapon to be used, as Calvin stated, for the purpose of

> bringing sinners back to repentance and the removal of all bad examples, in order that the name of Jesus Christ be not blasphemed and others be not led to evil-doing by following them.[7]

[5] IV, xi. 1.
[6] *I. Calvini Opera Omnia,* vol. XIV, p. 675.
[7] *Institutes,* IV, xii. 5.

It was not until 1555 that the Council allowed the Consistory to exercise this power.

The passing of the *Ordinances,* modified as they were, did not end the struggles of Calvin. Constantly he had to fight the Council for the right of the Church to judge those fit to partake of the Holy Communion. So bitter was this struggle that, from 1546 to 1555, he expected momentarily to be driven from Geneva. The opposition was again led by the Libertines, who took every opportunity to embarrass the Reformer.

On one occasion, the Consistory excommunicated a profligate for public scandals, but the Council set aside the sentence. Calvin declared that he would maintain the Church's right to determine who was worthy to sit at the Lord's Table. The Libertines determined to challenge him. On the following Sunday, he preached on the state of mind with which the Lord's Table ought to be approached and added,

> As we are to receive the Lord's Supper, if any one to whom it has been interdicted by the Consistory should seek to intrude himself at this Table, I would certainly show myself, as long as I live, such as I ought to be.

In spite of this admonition, a group of Libertines arose and approached the Lord's Table. Calvin covered the sacred bread and wine with his hands and exclaimed,

> You may cut these hands and crush these limbs: my blood is yours—shed it. But you shall never force me to give holy things to the profane![8]

The Libertines, cowed by his display of moral courage, fell back and left the Church.

The recorded events of Calvin's sojourn in Geneva reveal, if anything, the fact that Calvin was not the "Dictator" he is so frequently pictured to be. Historical facts, recorded in the official Registers of Geneva, reveal that Calvin did not set up a theocracy in which he and the clergy dominated the govern-

[8] Hugh Y. Reyburn, *John Calvin,* pp. 163–164.

ment of the city. He was not even a citizen of Geneva until 1559, and he never appeared before the Council except when his advice was asked or some religious question was up for debate. He never occupied a political or civil office. It is a matter of record that he opposed clerical control of civil and political affairs and confined the Church to the spiritual sword.

As a private citizen, Calvin influenced the social, educational, and economic life of Geneva. Cleanliness was practically unknown in towns of his generation and epidemics were common and numerous. He moved the Council to make permanent regulations for establishing sanitary conditions and supervision of markets. Beggars were prohibited from the streets, but a hospital and poorhouse were provided and well conducted. Calvin labored zealously for the education of all classes and established the famous Academy, whose influence reached all parts of Europe and even to the British Isles. He urged the Council to introduce the cloth and silk industry and thus laid the foundation for the temporal wealth of Geneva. This industry, incidentally, proved especially successful in Geneva because Calvin, through the Gospel, created within the individual the love of work, honesty, thrift, and cooperation. He taught that capital was not an evil thing, but the blessed result of honest labor and that it could be used for the welfare of mankind. Countries under the influence of Calvinism were invariably connected with growing industry and wealth. His interest and genius were such that there was scarcely a facet of Genevan life that he was not consulted about and his advice asked.

Foundations for Liberty

It is no mere coincidence that religious and political liberty arose in those countries where Calvinism had penetrated most deeply, namely, Switzerland, Holland, Rhenish Germany,

Scotland, England, Wales, and colonial America. Today, there appears to be a reluctance to acknowledge the tremendous debt owed to Calvin and Geneva, and the oft-quoted admonition of John Adams seems especially apropos: "Let not Geneva be forgotten or despised. Religious liberty owes it most respect."[9] Liberty, endangered in the present day, may well return to the principles laid down by John Calvin.

To appreciate fully the pioneer work of the Reformer, one must keep in mind the plight of the common man in the sixteenth century. Ecclesiastically, he was a bond servant of the Roman Catholic Church. He had no voice in the government of the Church and was completely dominated by the clergy. Politically, he was a bond servant of his feudal lord and did not even dream of having a share in the responsibility of government. Religious and political liberty were nonexistent.

Ecclesiastical chains were broken for the common man with the realization that he could enter into the presence of God without the intercession of a human priest and he could be justified without the imposition of penances and the purchase of indulgences. The priesthood of every believer and justification by faith alone were two mighty Reformed doctrines which jointly unshackled the common man from the degrading chains that Rome's hierarchy had forged over the centuries. By faith in Christ the believer was freed from Rome.

Furthermore, the common man learned through the teachings of Calvin that all men were equal before God. When God chooses men for salvation he takes no account of their social position, their wealth or poverty, their education or their ignorance. The doctrine of election played an important part in restoring the dignity of the individual and releasing him from abject servitude to tyrants.

Secure in the knowledge that he was a son of God through faith, the Calvinist became a pronounced individualist in the

[9] *The Works of John Adams,* vol. VI, p. 313.

sense that he insisted on governing himself in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience and thus refused to be governed by external authority when in conflict with the Word of God. This liberty of conscience, in respect to unlawful ecclesiastical and political authority, was the foundation for liberty of worship and liberty of speech. The conscience of the Calvinist was subject to God and never to man.

Calvin's era was that of the absolute State. The development of an independent Church was a major contribution of the Reformer to the cause of liberty. While he was not fully successful in obtaining the complete independence of the Church, nevertheless his ideas prevailed in due course. His insistence on the full liberty of the pulpit opened the door to the whole cause of liberty. The creation of an ecclesiastical Consistory, composed of five pastors and twelve elders, gave laymen a controlling place in the government of the Church and delivered that government from clerical domination.

While fighting the rising tide of State absolutism which threatened to engulf the Church, Calvin equally opposed clerical control of civil and political affairs and confined the Church to the use of the spiritual sword. The State, to Calvin's way of thinking, was to be fully independent in all temporal matters and subject only to the laws of God. His influence on the body politic was through individual men regenerated by the preaching of the Word. He preached, and influenced other to preach, just before elections took place, exhorting people to see that the men they chose were men who walked uprightly and governed their lives according to God's laws. Calvin aimed at the sole rule of Christ and His Word, both in Church and State, but without mixture and interference.

By adhering to the principles laid down by Christ and the twelve apostles, Calvin labored to keep separate the God-given jurisdictions of Church and State and thus laid the foundation for a free Church in a free State.

✲ Chapter IX ✲

KING OF THE CHURCH

THE magnificent contribution of the Church in Scotland to the cause of Church-State separation was the manifestation and defense of the principle that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of the Church.

To establish the Headship of Christ in the life of the Church, the Scottish Reformers had not only to rid the Church of popish domination but also to free the Church from State control. They had to establish the fact that the Church's government is derived from Christ alone and is distinct from, and not subordinate in its own sphere to, the civil magistrate. Several centuries of bitter conflict and bloodshed resulted before the establishment of the Church's independence from both papal and state control.

With few exceptions, the rulers in Europe during the sixteenth century determined the religion of their subjects and regulated the affairs of the Church, the accepted principle being *cuius regio eius religio*—"whose is the government, his is the religion." As the acknowledged head of society, the king considered himself the rightful ruler over both Church and State. It was his prerogative, according to the practice of the day, to determine the religion of the people.

Virtually unbelievable as all this may sound to us, it was quite run-of-the-mill procedure in sixteenth-century Europe, where Church and State were viewed as a unity and not as two complete and independent societies. Now, four hundred

years later, the Church is regarded as essentially a voluntary society, whose membership does not necessarily end at a State's boundaries. But it is only during the last three centuries, however, that the distinction between the two societies of Church and State has been recognized—and the conflict in Scotland helped to establish this distinction.

The Beginning of the Reformation

At the beginning of the Reformation era in Scotland the Roman Catholic hierarchy—in addition to absolute control over the Church—exerted a substantial amount of control over the affairs of the State. Several Scottish kings had bestowed large grants of land and other gifts upon the clergy in order to counterbalance the power of the feudal nobility, until fully half of the national wealth belonged to the clergy. These reverend gentlemen used this wealth for political ends, becoming privy councillors and forthwith occupying the principal offices of the State.

The lives of the clergy, in common with those upon the Continent, were a scandal to religion—the bishops, corrupted by wealth, set a sad example of debauchery for the lesser clerics. Learning, alas, was of no interest to the bishops either, and they seldom deigned to preach. The lower clergy imitated this profligacy, and their chief interest seemed to lie in extracting money from the laity. Small wonder that Scotland became a poor and backward country and its citizens ignorant and superstitious!

The Reformation movement slowly penetrated Scotland, being sparked both by the activities of Scottish students who had studied on the Continent and by the circulation of Lutheran and other Reformed writings. One of the first of the young Reformers to preach the Gospel in Scotland was Patrick Hamilton, a young nobleman who had been in-

fluenced by Lutheran doctrines while studying abroad. Archbishop David Beaton had him arrested and burned at the stake in 1528, and the Roman Catholic hierarchy from then on pursued a policy of suppressing the Reformation by a merciless course of persecution. Another prominent martyr, burned at the stake in 1546 for preaching the Gospel, was the learned George Wishart, whose chief claim to fame was that he had influenced John Knox.

John Knox

In April 1547, Knox became preacher at St. Andrews, where he proclaimed the Gospel with such effect that he gained the bitter enmity of the Roman Catholic clergy. The Castle of St. Andrews, where Knox resided, was besieged with the aid of French troops, and he was seized and condemned to the life of a galley slave for a period of nineteen months. Upon his release he went to England, where he was offered the bishopric of Rochester. This he refused because he regarded the prelacy as having no scriptural sanction. In 1553, he left England for the Continent and after a pastorate at Frankfort, went to Geneva, where he remained—except for a brief visit to Scotland in 1555–56—until his return to his native land in 1559.

To understand the events of the Scottish Reformation, the reader must keep in mind the political situation of that period.

King James V, who ruled Scotland from 1513 to 1542, remained faithful to the Roman Catholic faith in which he had been born and so ingratiated himself with the pope that he was able even to secure the appointment of his various bastard children to some of the wealthiest ecclesiastical benefices in the kingdom (from which the fond father drew revenues until said children came of age). James married a French

princess, Mary of Lorraine, a sister of the French Duke of Guise. Their infant daughter Mary succeeded to the throne at the tender age of one week upon James's death in 1542.

The Earl of Arran, regarded as the great hope of the Protestant cause in Scotland, was appointed Regent for the infant Queen, but upset the ecclesiastical applecart by returning to the Roman Catholic fold and allowing Cardinal Beaton to further persecute the Protestants. In 1548, the young Queen Mary was sent to France for her education and in 1558 was married to the French Dauphin, Francis. He died two years later, and the following year Mary returned to Scotland, where she found the Reformation firmly established, with John Knox as the acknowledged leader.

The Reformer, John Knox, was now doing very well indeed. During the period of his exile (1547–59), a marvellous transformation had taken place in Scotland among all classes of the people—and a tremendous reaction had set in against the abuses and corruption of Roman Catholicism. Even though there were but a few Protestant preachers, Reformed doctrine took an ever-increasing hold on the people's hearts and minds. Parliament had legalized the reading of the Holy Scriptures in English in 1543, and pamphlets teaching the Reformed faith (*and* printed in English) now flooded the country. Even plays and ballads were employed to proclaim the Gospel and condemn Roman Catholic errors, somewhat as the old morality plays had been and were still being used. Thus, a popular ballad of the time asserts that:

> To pray to Peter, James and Johne,
> Our saulis to saif, power haif they none,
> For that belongs to Christ allone,
> He deit thairfore, He deit thairfore.[1]

The Spirit of God, by means of Scripture, pamphlet, play, and ballad kindled faith in Scottish hearts.

[1] Cited by A. M. Renwich in *The Story of the Scottish Reformation.*

The Spirit of God also provided a leader for the Reformation in the person of Knox, and at a time when leadership was sorely needed.

In 1554 the Queen Dowager, Mary of Lorraine, succeeded in ousting the Earl of Arran from the Regency and—though first courting the Protestants, in order to obtain their assent to the marriage of young Queen Mary to the Dauphin of France—secretly set about establishing Roman Catholicism and subjecting Scotland to the dominion of France. It was at this opportune time that John Knox returned to his homeland (May 2, 1559) and led the fight against the Queen Dowager's machinations. His preaching and leadership gave sustenance and encouragement to the Protestants, who overcame many obstacles and finally gained the victory in 1560.

That summer, the Scottish Parliament met at Edinburgh and pondered a petition signed by all ranks of the people, asking the abolition of popery. What then? In order to provide a substitute for Romanism, the Parliament assigned Knox and four of his friends to draw up a confession of faith, which was prepared in short order. Especially noteworthy is the Confession's affirmation [in Sections 11 and 18] that Jesus Christ is "the only Head of His Kirk," for this repudiated the strongly entrenched idea that the earthly ruler was the Head of the Church, as was claimed, for instance, in England.

The Confession, however, gave some power to the civil magistrates:

> Moreover, to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the reformation and purgation of religion appertaines; so that not only they are appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true religion, and for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever.

The Scottish Reformers held to the prevalent conception of one Christian society, whose spiritual and moral welfare was under the direction and guidance of both Church and State. Moreover, at that time (1560) Roman Catholic canon law and religious practices were so joined to secular life that only an action on the part of Parliament could bring a separation. Nevertheless, the Reformers took good care, when they later framed the Book of Discipline, to keep ecclesiastical discipline within the jurisdiction of the Church "for reproving and correcting these faults which the civil sword doth either neglect or may not punish."

Knox and Queen Mary

The young and beautiful Queen Mary arrived in Scotland in August of 1561. A staunch Roman Catholic, she was thoroughly convinced that in religious matters subjects were bound to follow the sovereign, and so refused to ratify the Scots Confession which the Scottish Parliament had adopted.

Nor did she make any secret of her convictions—from the very first interview with John Knox, he knew just where she stood. She claimed absolute power over the conscience of her subjects, and minced no words in saying so.

Thus, in their first interview she accused Knox of having

> "taught the people to receive another religion than their princes allow: and how can that doctrine be of God, seeing that God commands subjects to obey their princes?"

Knox replied:

> Madam, as right religion took neither original nor authority from worldly princes, but from the Eternal God alone, so are not subjects bound to frame their religion according to the appetites of their princes.

When Knox declared that God "commands queens to be nurses unto His people," Mary answered, "Yea, but ye are not the Church that I will nourish: I will defend the Kirk of Rome, for, I think, it is the true Kirk of God." To this Knox boldly replied: "Your will, Madame, is no reason; neither doth your thought make that Roman harlot to be the true and immaculate spouse of Jesus Christ." And when Queen Mary maintained, "My conscience is not so," Knox answered, "Conscience, Madame, requires knowledge, and I fear that right knowledge ye have none." [2]

Failing to influence Knox, Queen Mary used her wiles to influence some of the leading Protestant laymen and when the General Assembly of the Church met in December 1561, they declined to take their seats as members of that body because the Queen had not authorized it. The Secretary of State, Maitland of Lethington, made a formal objection to Knox that the Assembly could not be held, as the Queen had not given her consent to such a meeting. To this Knox made his famous and fundamental reply: "Take from us the liberty of assemblies, and take from us the gospel." [3]

The freedom of assembly was vital not only to the life of the Church but to the civil liberties of the nation as well. The General Assembly decided the issue by simply going on with its business without the consent of either Parliament or the Queen—both minister and layman understood that not only the spiritual independence of the Church, but the very cause of Christ itself, was at stake. This established a precedent, and throughout the reign of Mary the Church conducted her affairs independently of sovereign and State alike.

This freedom of the Church was reflected in her growth. In 1560 there were only six ministers at the Assembly, and only twelve in all Scotland. Seven years later there were 252 ministers, and they were assisted by 154 exhorters and 467

[2] John Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 233.
[3] John Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

readers. Unrestrained by civil authority and with freedom to concentrate on her spiritual functions, the Church grew and prospered.

Andrew Melville

In 1567, Queen Mary's conduct alienated the nation and led to her abdication. Her infant son was proclaimed James VI of Scotland and regents were duly appointed to govern until he came of age in 1578.

One of these Regents, the Earl of Norton, lost little time in an attempt to minimize the freedom and independence of the Church by the introduction of "tulchan bishops" into Church government. We might add that in Scotland the stuffed skin of a calf, a "tulchan," was set beside a cow at milking time, to induce her to give her milk more freely. Roman bishops had been allowed to retain two thirds of their benefices for life and, when the estate became vacant, some needy minister was made a titular bishop, with the understanding that he would hand over the greater part of the revenue to the real holder, a nobleman who had obtained the estate from the Crown. Thus, through the tulchan bishop the nobleman could "milk" the Church.

The primary obstacle to this neat little plan was the Presbyterian Church, which refused to recognize or sanction the office of bishop. This caused a struggle between Church and State in which Andrew Melville took a leading part in maintaining the independence of the Church. At one point Regent Morton, no mean opponent, threatened him with hanging. To which Melville replied:

> Tush, sir, threaten your courtiers after that manner. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. Let God be glorified; it will not be in your power to hang or exile his truth.[4]

[4] *Melville's Diary*, pp. 52–53.

And the Church, taking its cue from him, refused to act in a servile way to the State.

But the Crown and the nobility, possessed by greed and a desire to control the Church, continued to maneuver for tulchan bishops. Under Melville the General Assembly drew up the Second Book of Discipline, which discontinued the office of bishop and required those holding such offices to resign them. This policy was opposed by James VI, who—at the early age of twelve—began to exercise his monarchical power in 1578. His advisors influenced Parliament to pass what were known as the Black Acts of 1584, which "confirmed the royal authority over all estates, as well spiritual as temporal" and constituted "the ordinary bishop of the diocese, or others, the king's commissioners," judges in ecclesiastical causes. This legislation, fought by the Church, was repealed in 1592 and Presbyterian discipline was reestablished.

Although the act of Parliament of 1592 was a great victory for the independence of the Church, it contained several clauses which imperiled that same independence. First, it retained the system of lay patronage, which tended to enslave both minister and Church. Second, it prohibited the General Assembly from meeting except when the time and place of the next meeting had been appointed by the King, a provision which became the basis for a claim of royal supremacy over the Church.

In 1596, a Roman Catholic conspiracy to dominate Scotland was formed by various prominent earls of the kingdom. The Church excommunicated them, but they were pardoned by King James. The Church Assembly sent a delegation to inform the king of the spiritual independence of the Church. James attempted to browbeat the deputation, but Andrew Melville—terming him "God's silly vassal"—said:

> Sir, we will always humbly reverence your Majesty in public; but, since we have this occasion to be with your

> Majesty in private, and since you are brought in extreme danger of your life and crown, and along with you the country and the Church of Christ are like to go to wreck, for not telling you the truth and giving you faithful counsel, we must discharge our duty or else be traitors both to Christ and you. Therefore, Sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again I must tell you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: There is King James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose Kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member.[5]

This principle, so boldly maintained by Melville, of the dual kingdoms and rulers is essential to the freedom and purity of the Church. Not only that: it is basic for civil liberty as well, as the latter cannot long exist without religious freedom, as history so frequently attests.

James yielded for a time, but soon demanded that the General Assembly never meet without his permission and that no act of the Church could be valid until he ratified it. Finding that the ministers would not accede to his wishes, he began a subtle campaign to create a subservient ministry by flattery, deceit, and bribery, wherein those who dared to maintain their independence were banished.

In 1603 James VI of Scotland ascended to the English throne as well and was thereafter known as James I. He immediately revealed his deep hatred of Puritans and Presbyterians alike, and in 1605 he prorogued the Scottish Church Assembly. When the Assembly met at a later date, he cast fourteen ministers into prison—and after a trial by a packed jury, eight were banished to the Highlands and six to France.

In 1606, Andrew Melville was summoned to London, thrown into the Tower, subjected to a tedious imprisonment of four years, and afterward allowed to retire to France, where he died.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 245–246.

One of the ministers cast into prison stated the real issue of the conflict in a personal letter, of which we give an excerpt:

> Jesus Christ is the King of saints, and that His Church is a most free Kingdom, not only to convene, hold, and keep her meetings and assemblies, but also to judge of all her affairs, in all her meetings and conventions, amongst her members and subjects. These two points—(1) that Christ is Head of His Church, and (2) that she is free in her government from all other jurisdictions except Christ's—these two points, I say, are the special cause of our imprisonment.[6]

The Westminster Assembly of Divines

James I died in 1625 and was succeeded by his son, Charles I, who—spurred on by Archbishop Laud—pursued his father's anti-Presbyterian policy with renewed vigor. In his attempt to subvert the Presbyterian system by imposition of the Book of Canons and the Liturgy, the crisis came in July 1637 when the dean of St. Giles Church, Edinburgh, attempted to read the Liturgy during a service there. An old woman of the parish, Jenny Geddes by name, felt that she could stand no more and shrieking, "Villain, dost thou say mass at my lug!" seized the stool on which she had been sitting and hurled it at the dean's head. This was the spark which ignited the flame of open resistance to the tyrannical invasion of sacred rights. Finally the king was compelled to allow a free General Assembly to meet and the independence of the Church was again asserted.

Instead of learning a lesson, however, Charles I now attempted to subdue Scotland by force, but was defeated. Civil war in England soon followed, a war in which the forces of King Charles were pitted against those of the Long Parliament. This Parliament, having a predominantly Puritan

[6] *Select Biographies*, Wodrow Society, p. 23.

membership, sought aid from Scotland and agreed to enter with that country into "The Solemn League and Covenant" of 1643, whereby, among other things, both nations pledged themselves to conformity in religion according to the Word of God. The English Parliament thereupon passed a bill abolishing the Episcopal hierarchy, in order to prepare the way for a new form of Church government. To frame this new ecclesiastical government, Parliament called a number of outstanding divines into convocation, a gathering that was later known as the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

A very important thing to note in connection with Church-State relationships is that the Long Parliament, though zealous to establish civil liberty, had no idea of giving the Church liberty to rule herself. Parliament was convinced, perhaps from a dread of permitting ecclesiastical persons to possess civil jurisdiction, that civil rulers ought to rule in ecclesiastical causes. It was stated clearly that the prime purpose for calling the Assembly of Divines was "to consult and advise" with Parliament in setting up such a Church government "as may be most agreeable to God's holy Word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the Church at home, and nearer with the Church of Scotland, and other Reformed Churches abroad." This principle of framing ecclesiastical government agreeable to the Word of God actually brought the Assembly in conflict with some of its Erastian members and with the Parliament, which held that the Church was a "creature of the State" and thus should yield her government to the State.

Some of those who espoused Erastianism did so from fear that independent Church jurisdiction would produce a species of spiritual despotism similar to that which had just been abolished and that of Roman Catholicism. To support their position the Erastians had as their champion, John Selden, one of the really great scholars of Christendom. Op-

posing him was one of the youngest members of the Westminster Assembly, George Gillespie of Scotland. In one speech, he swept away the argument of the learned Selden and vindicated the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ to govern, by His own laws, the Church which He had purchased for Himself with His blood. This influenced the Assembly to pass the proposition "that Jesus Christ as King and Head of His Church hath appointed an ecclesiastical government in His Church in the hand of Church officers distinct from the civil government." This proposition, radical for the seventeenth century, established the scriptural position of separate jurisdiction for the Church.

At the same time it must be borne in mind that there was not the least intention on the part of the Westminster Assembly to invade the civil domain. The Scottish Commissioners, in fact, pointed out that in eighty years of existence the Protestant Church had never invaded the civil sphere. This was in obedience to the rule agreed upon by the General Assembly of 1578, that

> Diligence should be taken, chiefly by the Moderator, that only ecclesiastical things be handled in the Assemblies, and that there be no meddling with any thing pertaining to the civil jurisdiction.[7]

The ministers of London, during the sessions of the Westminster Assembly, also maintained that position and wrote,

> The power of Synods contended for is—not civil, they have no power to take cognizance of civil causes, as such, not to indict any civil punishments . . . but merely spiritual, they judge only in ecclesiastical causes, in a spiritual manner, by spiritual censures, to spiritual ends, as did that Synod, Acts 15.[8]

And the Westminster Assembly gave expression to this limitation in the Confession in these words:

[7] Second Book of Discipline, chap. 7, sec. 4.
[8] *The Divine Right of Government,* p. 237.

> Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical; are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases of extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.[9]

The main object of the Westminster Assembly was to frame such a system of Church government and public worship as might unite the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland. This was never accomplished, for upon the ascendancy and rule of Cromwell, this system of government was discouraged and nullified.

In 1660, King Charles II was restored to the throne. He immediately claimed authority in matters both civil and ecclesiastical and restored the prelatic hierarchy to the possession of all their rank, wealth, and power. The Church of Scotland endured terrible persecution for a period of twenty-eight years, one of the darkest and yet one of the most heroic eras of Scottish history, when—rather than submit to a prelatic and Erastian form of government—four hundred ministers suffered ejection from their pulpits. People refused to attend the parish churches although fined, imprisoned, scourged, and branded with red-hot irons for failure to do so. Government forces put people to death by horrible tortures and without their "day in court." It is estimated that from 1660 to 1688, some 18,000 persons had suffered in one way or another for their allegiance to the Word of God and to Christ as the only Head and Lawgiver of the Church. Relief came in 1688 with the flight of James II and the accession to the throne of the Protestants William and Mary, who saw to it that religious liberty was restored to the Scottish Church.

Why did the preachers and people of Scotland endure such horrible persecution and what was the motive that carried them through all their trials? They fought against the des-

[9] Chap. XXXI, sec. IV.

potism of the State, for they would not acknowledge that the State had a right to dictate their worship. Above all, it was a struggle for the principle that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of the Church. This philosophy was well stated by one of the Scottish martyrs, James Skene:

> I lay down my life owning Jesus Christ's despised interest, and for asserting that He is King and Head of His own Church, and has not deputed any other, Pope, King, or Council, to be His vicegerent on the earth.[10]

[10] *Cloud of Witnesses,* p. 92.

✲ Chapter X ✲

A FREE CHURCH IN A FREE STATE

THE launching of the successful American experiment of Church-State separation, and that without bloodshed, has been considered to be one of the greatest achievements in the history of man. It represented a radical departure from the European practice of State support and control of religion. Indeed, it was a departure from the practice of nine of the thirteen original colonies, which had established churches supported by public funds. With the adoption of the Federal Constitution and the accompanying Bill of Rights, a new social phenomenon made its bow: self-governing and self-supporting religious denominations entirely independent of the State.

Two simple but far-reaching sentences in the Federal Constitution define the nature of that separation:

> No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States,

and

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

And here is the crux of the whole matter. Here is guaranteed liberty to worship according to the dictates of an individual's conscience without punishment, interference, or support of the civil government. Revolutionary though this concept of

separation may be, it was no flash in the pan—its wisdom has been vindicated by nearly two centuries of practice.

When inquiry is made as to the source of this principle of Church-State separation and the influences that brought it into being, one discovers a striking reversal of historical judgment. Such historians as George Bancroft and H. L. Osgood, whose works are still considered authoritative, give full credit to the strong religious convictions of the early settlers of this country as a benevolent influence on American character and institutions. Concurring in this judgment was the famous German historian, Leopold von Ranke, and the equally famous French historian, Alexis de Tocqueville. In contrast, more recent historians, such as R. G. Usher and J. T. Adams, have depicted the Puritans, and especially the clergy, as tyrannical enemies of liberty and democracy! Liberty, they claim, was inspired by principles which stemmed from a more liberal theology. Some observers would give credit to a humanistic and even naturalistic philosophy and claim that a few Deists and Unitarians were the true liberators and creators of ecclesiastical-civil separation. To establish such claims, they point to all the Puritan intolerance which shocks the modern conscience, but, at the same time, they ignore the value of Calvinistic theology in bringing about both religious and civil liberty.

A historian, if he wants to be truly objective, cannot judge one generation by the standards of another; nor allow the evaluation of the impact of Calvinism to be influenced by his antagonism toward it; nor neglect, in the case of the Puritans, the influence of their European heritage. To appraise the Puritans correctly, we must understand what these people were, what they believed, and what they were trying to do. We must seek to understand their spirit, their theology, their hopes, their ideals. That they were human, fallible, and imperfect is evident and freely acknowledged even by their own

writers. Nevertheless, in spite of their apparent sternness and intolerance, their religious convictions and principles helped to establish a free church in a free state.

Puritan Principles and Influence

There is no understanding nor appreciation of the Puritan contribution to liberty unless one recognizes the fact that they based their religious, moral, social, and political life—in fact, their whole sphere of being—upon the Holy Bible, which they considered to be God's sufficient and infallible revelation to man of the Divine will. They were determined to know what His will was concerning them, and to fulfill that will at any cost. True, they did not understand the scriptural distinction between the spiritual and the temporal Kingdoms, and so allowed the civil government to enter into the realm of conscience. The Scriptures, however, had in themselves a certain principle of separation that ultimately worked the cure of the limitation of religious and civil liberty. The Scriptures teach that all men are equal in the sight of God, and the understanding of this teaching eventually led men to acknowledge that all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law. The Scriptures also teach that every believer should "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1) and this delivered the early settlers from "priestly domination" because they felt free to interpret the Word for themselves. The very fact that the early colonists accepted the authority of the Holy Bible rather than that of a religious hierarchy was a major factor in establishing the separate jurisdictions of Church and State in this country.

The Calvinism of the early settlers and the continuance of this theology had much to do with the formation of American institutions: indeed, so much so that Leopold von Ranke called John Calvin the virtual founder of America. Dr.

Charles S. McCoy, in speaking of Puritan federal theology, stated that it "provided the cultural seedbed which produced the federal political philosophy of the American Constitution." [1]

Calvinism stressed the freedom of conscience and the accessibility of the individual soul to God. It maintained the equality of men before the Almighty and the rights of the individual man. Calvinism cracked the power of political absolutism by emphasizing the Lordship of Christ over the Church, clearly operating through officers distinct from civil power. Calvinism hammered out the distinct and separate jurisdiction of civil and ecclesiastical power. Calvinism originated the covenant theory of government that gave birth to government by constitution.

Calvinism was the theology of the Congregationalists of New England, of the Scotch Presbyterians and the Dutch Reformed of the Middle States, of the Baptists and the Huguenots, and even had some influence over the evangelical element of the Anglicans. It is estimated that the population of the thirteen colonies in the year 1776 was approximately 2,500,000, and at least half of these were Calvinists. This fact led Ralph Barton Perry, Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University, to write,

> It is safe to assume, then, that the influence of puritanism, in the broad Calvinistic sense, was a major force in the late colonial period, and that it contributed uniquely and profoundly to the making of the American mind when the American mind was in the making.[2]

and again,

> The Puritans imprinted on English and American institutions a quality of manly courage, self-reliance, and sobriety. We are still drawing upon the reserves of spiritual vigor which they accumulated.[3]

[1] *Christian Century*, July 11, 1962.
[2] *Puritanism and Democracy*, New York, 1944, p. 81.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

We must, of course, take cognizance of the strong current criticism levelled at the vigorous Calvinism of the early colonists. Much of this seems biased and almost blind in that it does not take into account the well-known fact that where Calvinism flourished republicanism soon followed. We need only point out that religious and civil liberty arose in those countries such as Switzerland, Rhenish Germany, Holland, Scotland, England, and America where Calvinism was the predominant theology.

This extraordinary phenomenon is not a mere coincidence and must be taken into account by the historian. The Calvinists *did* possess faults which can be justly criticized and deplored, but we may well ask where else in history we may find the good fruits of Calvinism *sans* the faults the Calvinists possessed? And we may rightly wonder whether those good fruits possess any permanence apart from any of the alleged faults of Calvinism.

Then, there is another charge that needs toppling, for no charge against the faith of Calvin is more baseless than this particular barb, which alleges that the early North American colonists established a theocracy in the sense of the clergy controlling the civil government. Small danger! Those same colonists had not forgotten the history of clerical control in England, and a jealous public sentiment accordingly excluded the clergy from political office in *New* England. They shunned the Roman Catholic theory that the clergy had an inherent right to direct the affairs of the State. In Massachusetts, the ultimate control of both Church and State was in the hands of the General Court, composed entirely of laymen. The clergy in the State had a lesser part in the control of civil government, *per se,* than had the civil government in the control of the Church.

The general thrust in pre-Revolutionary days was toward Erastianism, or control of the State over the Church. It was to abolish Erastianism and its incipient dangers that the

First Amendment was enacted, bidding Congress to "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The early settlers, it must be remembered, had not shaken entirely the notions and traditions of their home country by the simple fact that they had crossed the ocean and now resided on the other side of that ocean. Those settlers held to the belief, common in their day, that the establishment of religion by civil law was both right and necessary. The idea of a national church was firmly fixed in mind, and the concept of tolerating all sects *did not exist,* for the most part, in the minds of the early settlers. The comparatively small body of Pilgrims were Separatists, but the substantially larger body of Puritans were not. *Their* plan was to establish in the New World a branch of the Church of England, but without the alleged corruptions and false practices which they deplored so deeply in the Church of the mother country. They desired to fashion a national church as closely as could be done after the pattern which they saw set forth in the Scriptures.

The desire to keep the Church pure and unspotted from the world explains the political structure which the Puritans designed to support and protect that Church. The modern mind is shocked that the Puritans limited voting privileges to church members only. This was an understandable reaction against conditions in England, where the "ungodly" often determined, or had the deciding voice at least in the doctrines, the government, and the liturgy of the Church. The Puritans suffered some harsh persecution for their opposition to this state of affairs and sought to prevent a similar situation in the New World. And it might be said in the Puritans' favor that, although they made membership in the Church the condition of a voice in affairs of the State, the united voices of the Church members were expressed, not as a church but as a civic body. They were careful not to merge

Church and State. The accusation that the clergy controlled the State because they controlled membership in the Church shows too little knowledge of the actual life and practice of the colonial Church. Both clergy and lay elders were zealous for the Church's purity and were primarily interested in knowing whether an individual was truly regenerate rather than in knowing how he was going to vote. Furthermore, the clergy did not have the exclusive right to examine for Church membership but shared this responsibility with the elders.

The Cambridge Platform

The Puritan point of view of the proper Church-State relationship is set forth in the Cambridge Platform, a document adopted in 1648 by a synod of the Massachusetts churches. A recent book states that "The Platform was one of the greatest creations of the founding fathers." [4]

In general accord with Calvin's teaching, the Church and the magistracy had their distinct jurisdictions within which they were supposed to act in accordance with the divine law as revealed in the Scripture. The Church was in no way to meddle with civil affairs:

> Church Government stands in no opposition to Civil Government of Commonwealths, nor any way intrencheth upon the authority of the civil magistrates in their jurisdictions. . . . It is unlawful for Church-Officers to meddle with the Sword of the Magistrates.

On the other hand, the magistrates should not "meddle with the work proper to Church-Officers . . . compel their subjects to become church members." The Puritans made a distinction between the "inward" affairs of the Church and the "outward" or external affairs. As to the latter, the magistrates had power to act in calling synods and in providing

[4] H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity*, p. 129.

financial support. The civil authorities were urged to maintain both tablets of the Decalogue and to punish

> Idolatry, Blasphemy, Heresy, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions, that destroy the Foundation, open contempt of the Word preached, profanation of the Lord's Day, disturbing the peaceable administration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God, and the like. . . .

The Cambridge Platform represented a tremendous advance in Church-State relations in comparison with the general European principle of *cuius regio eius religio*—"whose is the government, his is the religion." In Europe, civil government meddled with the spiritual functions of the Church, compelled church membership, elected church officers, exercised spiritual discipline. All this was rejected by the Cambridge Platform which—in an effort to show that there was no intention to set up a theocracy, i.e., a system of a Church-ruled State—insisted that the Church had no right to meddle with civil affairs. While this document does not go as far in legal separation as does the Federal Constitution, nevertheless it initiated the principle of two jurisdictions and a separation of Church and State functions.

The underlying error of the framers of the Cambridge Platform was that, in their zeal to maintain orderly conduct and good morals, they allowed the State to invade the domain of the individual conscience and subjected the citizens to civil censure for spiritual sins as well as for those of the flesh. They were as anxious to have people live godly lives as good moral lives. The seventeenth century did not differentiate between the first and second tablets of the Decalogue. Atheism was considered as heinous as murdering your neighbor; idolatry, as bad as adultery; profanity, as grave an offense as theft; and Sabbath-breaking was as far beyond the pale as was perjury. The mistake the early colonists made —in common with the Old World, though in a lesser de-

gree—was in giving the State power to enter the religious realm, without marking the sharp distinction that Scripture makes between the spiritual and the temporal Kingdoms. However, a degree of Church-State separation was stipulated in the Platform, and it was only a question of time and experimentation before the Scriptural principle would be fully realized.

Roger Williams

One of the first individuals to grasp the full distinction between the two jurisdictions, i.e., of Church and State, was Roger Williams. Upon arriving in Boston in 1631, he insisted that the churches in the colonies separate themselves entirely from the Church of England, which he regarded as a stepchild of the devil himself. He maintained in his published works, moreover, that magistrates were to rule only in civil and never in religious matters. He wrote that, "God requireth not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and inforced in any civil state" [5] and that "The civil sword cannot act either in restraining the souls of the people from worship or in constraining them to worship." [6]

In setting forth the sharp distinction between the spiritual and the temporal Kingdoms, Williams was far in advance of his times. This does not mean that he was a theological liberal, for his works give evidence that he remained a staunch Calvinist all his life, holding to the authority of the Scriptures from which he obtained his views. The chief ground for his banishment from Massachusetts was not so much his view of separation of Church and State but rather his insistence that the Colony's charter was worthless because King Charles I of England had no authority to grant it. Williams fled to Rhode Island, where a serious attempt was made to limit the

[5] *The Bloudy Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience.*
[6] *The Hireling Ministry None of Christ.*

State to "civil things" and to provide a "Livelie Experiment" in Church-State separation. This experiment was a precursor of what was to come about a hundred years later.

Some Factors in the Establishment of Liberty

Roger Williams, as noted above, was a century before his time insofar as his views on separation of Church and State were concerned, but other factors gradually made this a reality in American life. The English Act of Toleration, which was enacted in 1689, had a significant influence on colonial policy in America. This Act permitted, for the first time since England became a nation we might note, the worship of God outside of the Established Church. Those who did not attend the State-supported Church were exempted from civil penalties by the Act also, although Nonconformist ministers had to subscribe to the "doctrinal" part of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. To us today, this Act of Toleration seems a poor thing at best, restrictive and inadequate, for it does not answer to our concept of religious liberty. Nevertheless, it was a great stride forward beyond civil despotism and it influenced a measure of toleration in colonial America.

A more potent factor in securing religious liberty was the establishment on North American soil of such a wide variety of denominations that ecclesiastical conformity was difficult to maintain. Quakers, Baptists, Dutch Reformed, and Presbyterians—all contributed to the separation of Church and State. No less a personage than Thomas Jefferson remarked, in his "Notes on Virginia," that several different churches were better than one, as a variety of religious opinions was best suited to progress and freedom. This, too, was the attitude of Voltaire, who felt that

> If there were one religion in England, its despotism would be terrible; if there were only two, they would

> destroy each other; but there are thirty, and therefore they live in peace and happiness.[7]

In the colonies where there was an Established Church, the Dissenters worked hard for religious freedom, and redoubled their efforts when there was some thought of establishing an Anglican episcopate in North America, early in the eighteenth century.

The Great Awakening of 1734–44 was another major factor in bringing about the separation of Church and State. Dr. Leo Pfeffer, the noted constitutional lawyer, says in this connection:

> The elevation of this concept into a constitutional principle was the achievement chiefly of two disparate and almost antagonistic forces that vied for the soul of the new republic—a deeply religious, evangelical, and pietist force led by such devout Christians as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Isaac Backus, and a skeptical anti-clerical force led by Jefferson and Tom Paine.[8]

The revival movement received its dynamic force from such Calvinistic leaders as the Dutch Reformed divine Frelinghuyzen, the Presbyterians Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies, the Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards, and the English evangelist George Whitefield. The Awakening came to grips with the Established Churches and caused many, under its influence, to feel that the alliance of Church and State was detrimental to the cause of true religion. Jonathan Edwards helped lay the foundation of separation by his insistence that Church and State were very different, and that the Church should be exalted as a spiritual and not as a political institution.

Some historians and observers feel that the struggle in Virginia influenced the American theories of Church-State separation and religious freedom more than any other his-

[7] *Lettres sur les Anglais.*

[8] Quoted from *The Liberties of an American,* p. 34 in *Church, State and Freedom,* Boston, 1953.

torical factor. Here, the Church of England was strongly entrenched as the Established Church, discrimination against other denominations was a matter of common policy. Thus, we read that Congregational ministers who came to the Virginia colony in 1642 were ordered to leave. Baptists were fined or imprisoned for holding unauthorized meetings. And the Presbyterians, along with other Dissenters, were taxed for the support of the State Church. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first petition for religious freedom was transmitted by the Baptists to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1760—the wonder is that they had waited even that long. But the time was not yet ripe for the reception and passing of this petition.

The American Revolution of 1776 had the effect of raising not only the question of political liberty but that of religious liberty as well. The Presbytery of Hanover petitioned the Virginia House of Burgesses to dissolve the alliance of Church and State and to allow "the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of our consciences." The Presbytery argued that the Gospel asked the support of only its own adherents; and did not in that respect need State aid. They felt, too, that Christianity would prevail and flourish through its own merits, and under the aegis of an all-prevailing and omniscient Providence.

The Presbyterians and Baptists were supported by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, both patriots and both Anglicans. It was about this time that the former drafted the Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, which he ranked next to the Declaration of Independence among his memorable achievements. Therein he stated:

> *Be it enacted by the General Assembly,* That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be

> free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

Although drawn up in 1777, the Bill was not enacted into law until 1785, under the leadership of James Madison and with strong popular support.

Then, a bill was presented in the Virginia Assembly to assess citizens for the support of religion. Madison, who had been trained in theology at Princeton under John Witherspoon, led the battle against this bill. He stated that the question before the people of Virginia was not whether religion was necessary to the welfare of mankind in general, but whether the establishment of religion as a part of the civil administration of the State was necessary to religion itself. History, he averred, showed that religion was corrupted by compulsory State establishment. No human policy had invented religion, for it was superhuman. Therefore, to compel support of religion by law would be tantamount to a confession that religion could not stand on its own merits. Said he,

> Who does not see that . . . the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever.[9]

Even with these forceful arguments, the assessment bill would have passed had it not been for the popular support of the idea of religious freedom.

The Constitution of the United States

The Constitution of the United States, as enacted in 1789, had no specific provision for the separation of Church and State. It was at first thought that no further limitation

[9] James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments,* sec. 3.

on the powers of the new central body, the U.S. Congress, should be added, since it was held that the Congress could have only such powers as had been conferred upon it, either by the people as individuals, or by the sovereign States. Nonetheless, many people feared leaving the question of religious liberty to mere implication, and so a series of ten Amendments, termed the Bill of Rights, were added to the U.S. Constitution in 1791.

The First Amendment to our Constitution begins:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

The path toward the enactment of this Amendment had been a long and tortuous one, and it is probably because of this long and arid journey that the "meat" of the Amendment is so succinctly stated, so admirably "laid on the line." Since its enactment, both State and Church have worked—each in its own sphere and way, and with extraordinary success—for the welfare of mankind. By keeping, each to its own bailiwick, peace has been established and kept between the two institutions, and the Scriptural distinction between Church and State has been manifest on a national scale.

The First Amendment to our Constitution provides a *legal* separation between Church and State: *not a moral nor a spiritual* separation. It provides simply, That Congress cannot establish a denomination as the favored religion nor can it prohibit any denomination from establishing itself on American soil. *The wall of separation is legal, we repeat, not moral or spiritual.* There is no reason, under the Constitution of the United States, why the principles of Christianity cannot pervade the laws and institutions of the United States of America.

✲ Chapter XI ✲

THE WALL OF SEPARATION

THE framers of the United States Constitution, by means of the First Amendment to that Constitution, erected a legal wall of separation between Church and State, a wall that has been an effective barrier between the two Kingdoms for over 170 years. The State has made no attempt to establish any religious denomination as a State Church, nor has any church been able to dominate the State. The Constitutional wall has been a sufficient protection to maintain the principle of "a free Church in a free State."

But the times in which we live are changing fast, and the middle of the twentieth century has marked the beginning of a stricter and narrower interpretation of our First Amendment. This new interpretation would not only separate Government from Establishment, as those terms are historically understood, but from religion itself. Not only is a legal separation demanded but a moral and spiritual separation as well. The Constitutional wall, according to recent interpretation, demands that the State be entirely secular and that it manifest a strict spirit of neutrality. This movement for a more rigid separation is led by a liberal element both within the Church and within the Supreme Court.

The Liberal Movement within the Church

The movement within the Church may be illustrated by a series of recommendations advocated by a Special Committee on Church and State, in a report given to the 1962 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.[1] The movement is by no means limited to the United Presbyterian Church, however—indeed, may be taken as representative of an ever-increasing number of denominations.

The Report to the 174th General Assembly recommended, among other things, that there be a cessation of the celebration of religious holidays, Bible reading, and prayer in public schools; that Sabbath laws be made less stringent; that there be no tax exemptions for religious agencies; and that there be no special exemption from military service for ministerial candidates and ordained clergymen. The Report also questioned whether the clergy should serve as military chaplains, paid by the State.

The above recommendations bear a remarkable resemblance to "the infidel program" to which Philip Schaff called attention in his excellent monograph, *Church and State in the United States*. Schaff, a truly great church historian, who taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, accused the Liberal League of attempting "to heathenize the Constitution and to denationalize Christianity." He quotes from the organ of the Liberal League, *The Index* (Jan. 4, 1873) as follows:

THE DEMANDS OF LIBERALISM

1. We demand that churches and other ecclesiastical property shall no longer be exempted from just taxation.

[1] See *Relations between Church and State, A Report to the 174th General Assembly*. Office of the General Assembly, Philadelphia, 1962.

2. We demand that the employment of chaplains in Congress, in State Legislatures, in the navy and militia, and in prisons, asylums, and all other institutions supported by public money, shall be discontinued.
3. We demand that all public appropriations for sectarian, educational, and charitable institutions shall cease.
4. We demand that all religious services now sustained by the government shall be abolished; and especially that the use of the Bible in the public schools, whether ostensibly as a text-book, or avowedly as a book of religious worship, shall be prohibited.
5. We demand that the appointment, by the President of the United States or by the Governors of the various States, of all religious festivals and feasts shall wholly cease.
6. We demand that the judicial oath in the courts, and in all other departments of the government, shall be abolished, and that simple affirmation under pains and penalties of perjury shall be established in its stead.
7. We demand that all laws, directly or indirectly, enforcing the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath shall be repealed.
8. We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of "Christian" morality shall be abrogated, and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights, and impartial liberty.
9. We demand that not only in the Constitutions of the United States and of the several States, but also in the practical administration of the same, no privilege or advantage shall be conceded to Christianity or any other special religion; that our entire political system shall be founded and administered on a purely secular basis; and that whatever changes shall prove necessary to this end shall be consistently, unflinchingly, and promptly made.

Schaff then proceeds to some general thoughts on the liberal program in the following fashion:

> To carry out their program, the Free-thinkers would have to revolutionize public sentiment, to alter the constitutions and laws of the country, to undo or repudiate our whole history, to unchristianize the nation, and sink it below the heathen standard.[2]

Little did he dream that a segment of his own denomination would seek to give reality to what he termed an "infidel program."

The Report of the Special Committee of the Presbyterian Church bases its desire for a totally secular state on the ground "that the conception of the 'Christian State' is as dangerous for true religion as for civil liberty." *Here is the root of the error.* A "Christian State" must not be confused with a "Church-dominated State." Western civilization owes much in its laws and institutions to Christian inspiration. The influence of Christian principles has been a definite blessing to the United States and the attempt to remove all traces of Christianity from public institutions shows abysmal ignorance of the source of America's greatness and stability. A State whose laws and institutions are influenced by Christian life and principles is a blessing both for true religion and for civil liberty.

The concept of a "Christian State" is of biblical origin. It was certainly in the mind of Christ when he gave his Great Commission to the Twelve to ". . . go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19). Thus would the ancient covenant made with Abraham be fulfilled: "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). This is an ever-constant theme in Old Testament prophecy:

> All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations (Psalms 22:27–28).

[2] Monograph, *Church and State in the United States,* New York, 1888, p. 45.

The book of Revelation (11:15) gives final witness that this splendid vision will be fulfilled in time and history when the Evangelist says that "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Thus, we see clearly that the concept of a "Christian nation" is a biblical one. It becomes so, however, not by virtue of either Church or clergy preempting or even directing any functions peculiar to the civil government. Rather do nations become the disciples of Christ through the medium of Christian personalities. The influence of redeemed men, who deem themselves responsible to Christ for all their actions, radiates in many directions and gradually transforms the whole of society—politically, economically, and socially. Men become redeemed by the preaching of the Gospel, even as Christ declared in the Great Commission that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). The Great Commission indicates the objective: Christianizing of all nations—it indicates also the means of accomplishing that objective: the preaching of repentance and remission of sins.

That a truly Christian Church should strive to make a nation secular is a betrayal of the very Commission with which Christ entrusted the early Church. To isolate God from government is worse than heathenism, for heathenism at least acknowledges the existence of some form of deity. Governments have a responsibility to God, inasmuch as they have been ordained by Him, and their actions therefore take on a moral character. Those who framed the federal Constitution recognized this fact and so erected a legal wall between Church and State—but not a moral and spiritual bulwark, nor one that separated either one or both parties from God and His laws. This original intent of the Founding Fathers is evidenced by the fact that the culture and institutions of the

United States are impregnated with Christian practices and principles.

The Supreme Court Decision

The same desire to separate government from religion appears in the *Engel* v. *Vitale* decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, which was handed down on June 25, 1962. In this decision, the Court ruled—on the basis of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment—that a 22-word one-sentence prayer written by the New York State Board of Regents is unconstitutional. In this connection the Court decreed that: "It is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by government." The government mentioned here is the New York state school board. And not only was "composing prayers" ruled unconstitutional—"sanctioning official prayers" received the axe as well.

This interpretation of the Constitutional wall shocked many people, who felt that the Supreme Court decision had, in effect, extended and heightened the wall far beyond any and all intent of the framers of our Constitution. The Constitutional wall, surely, they argued, was not intended to prevent the utterance of the innocuous prayer composed by the New York State Board of Regents, the simple prayer:

> Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country.

Would the framers of the First Amendment place the above prayer behind the Constitutional wall? Did they intend that the government of the United States should not recognize God? Did they have in mind a completely secular government? Was the wall to prevent any utterance of prayer in a

government hall? What was the intent of the First Amendment in the simple decree that

> *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof?*

By employment of the historical method, one can rather easily determine the intent of the Constitutional wall. The intent, as the historical context reveals, is: (1) to prevent the State from establishing a State church as such; and (2) to forbid that same State to prohibit any particular church from exercising its own form of religion. No better words can be used to explain the significance of this design than those of Justice Douglas in the concurring opinion:

> The Court analogizes the present case to those involving the traditional Established Church. We once had an Established Church, the Anglican. All baptisms and marriages had to take place there. That church was supported by taxation. In these and other ways the Anglican Church was favored over the others. The First Amendment put an end to placing any one church in a preferred position. It ended support of any church or all churches by taxation. It went further and prevented secular sanction to any religious ceremony, dogma, or rite. Thus, it prevents civil penalties from being applied against recalcitrants or nonconformists.

In the light of this context, Justice Douglas further states:

> I cannot say that to authorize this prayer is to establish a religion in the strictly historical meaning of those words. A religion is not established in the usual sense merely by letting those who choose to do so say the prayer that the public school teacher leads.

The ideology of the First Amendment springs from the struggle for religious freedom in Virginia. Both Jefferson and Madison, as we have seen in Chapter X, worked hard to place all denominations on the same level, so that not one could or would be considered the Established Church. A bill

was presented before the Virginia Legislature to assess citizens for the support of the Anglican Church. Madison argued that the establishment of religion as a part of the civil administration of the state of Virginia was not necessary to religion itself and that history showed religion was corrupted by compulsory state establishment. The assessment bill was defeated, which meant the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia.

What both Madison and Jefferson desired was the prohibition by Congress from establishment of a State church, or the use of tax money in support of organized religion, a precept clearly reflected in the use of the phrase "an establishment of religion." According to the dictionary definition of the word "establishment," when employed in such a context, means "an ecclesiastical system established by law; a state church." And the dictionary defines "established religion" as "a form of religion officially recognized and privileged by the government."

Thus, both the historical setting and the usual significance of the phrase, *an establishment of religion,* definitely indicate what the Constitutional wall was intended to separate: Church and State, *not* religion and State.

The source of confusion comes from our tendency to employ the words "Church" and "religion" as synonyms. To maintain that there must be a separation between Church and State does not necessarily mean that there must be a separation between religion and State. The Constitutional authority, Cooley, in his *Principles of Constitutional Law,*[3] said that the phrase at issue

> meant the setting up or recognition of a state church, or at least the conferring upon a church of special favors and advantages which are denied to others. It was never intended by the Constitution that the Government should be prohibited from recognizing religion.

[3] 2d ed., 1891, pp. 213–214.

To substantiate its contention that the mixture of government and religion brings forth evil results, the Supreme Court reaches back into our common past and maintains that

> It is a matter of history that this very practice of establishing governmentally composed prayers for religious services was one of the reasons which caused many of our early colonists to leave England and seek religious freedom in America.

This contention does not accord with historical facts. The Court makes reference to the struggle centering around the Book of Common Prayer in England. The struggle never centered around the right of the government to sponsor and authorize the Book of Common Prayer—there was no objection to this role of the government. The Puritans contended that the magistrate might set up true religion as revealed in Scripture and that it was his duty to abolish false religion. Not government sponsorship *per se* but government sponsorship of Roman Catholic practices was the crux of the Puritan opposition. As a matter of fact, at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, the Puritan leaders asked the government to see "that schools in cities, towns, and families, throughout all this kingdom, be taught by none but such as shall be tried and approved to be sound and upright in religion."

As to the Puritans who settled in New England, it must be remembered that the greater part had no desire to separate from the Established Church of England. The early colonists held to the belief, common in their day, that the establishment of religion by civil law was both right and necessary. The Puritans planned to establish in the New World a branch of the Church of England, but without the corruption and false practices which they deplored so deeply in the Church of the mother country.

The Puritan Separatists were but a splinter movement in England and in Massachusetts. The writings of these Sep-

aratists have been made available in carefully edited volumes. In summing up the teachings of a prominent Separatist, Dr. Leland H. Carlson writes:

> Barrow's views on the powers of the magistrate to enforce religion are blunt, terse, and lacking in toleration as understood to-day. The magistrate may set up true religion, may abolish false religion, and he may compel people to hear the word of God and participate in prayers. Thus, he may enforce external worship upon all his subjects. . . . If the magistrate fails to do his duty, or if he establishes false worship—in violation of Scriptural standards—the only course open to the faithful is to reject such false worship and to suffer the penalties imposed. Barrow admits the right of the magistrate to coerce, and by his imprisonment demonstrates his willingness to suffer.[4]

This attitude on the part of Separatists scarcely gives substance to the Supreme Court's contention that the Puritans left England to "seek freedom in America from England's governmentally ordained and supported religion."

Rather shocking is the statement in the Court's decision "that a union of government and religion tends to destroy government and to degrade religion." If the justices had stated that the union of *Church* and State has often brought forth evil, then historical evidence could have been found to support their contention. The permeation of Christian principles into organized government has been the source of America's greatness; the withdrawal of those same principles will inevitably lead to the nation's downfall. America's history *proves* that the penetration of Christianity into its culture and institutions has both strengthened government and ennobled religion.

The Court further grounds its decision against prayer in public schools on the basis that prayer establishes the religious beliefs embodied within it. The Regents' prayer can best be described as theistic rather than as specifically Chris-

[4] *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587–1590*, p. 13.

tian. Thus the Court rules out of bounds in public domain any prayer to, or expression of faith in, any God—be that God of Jew, Mohammedan, or Christian. Prayer is the soul's communion with God and comes from the heart of one who believes God exists. In fact, prayer presupposes belief. The reader receives the definite impression that the Supreme Court has resorted to an utterly trivial argument and a petty sophism when it maintains that prayer must be forbidden on public domain because it may further religious beliefs.

Thomas Jefferson is frequently quoted as one who would deny the teaching of religion in public schools. He is considered by liberals as a fraternal spirit and the constitutional oracle of government relations with religion in the field of education. That Jefferson was against ecclesiastical control of public education one cannot deny; *but he was not against the teaching of religion,* as is shown in the curricular draft which he prepared for the infant University of Virginia:

> The proofs of—God, the creator, preserver, and supreme ruler of the universe, the author of all the relations of morality, and of the laws and obligations these infer, will be within the province of the professor of ethics; to which adding the developments of these moral obligations, of those in which all sects agree, with a knowledge of the languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, a basis will be formed common to all sects.[5]

Education without a basic grounding in the fundamentals of Christian theism was unthinkable to Jefferson.

Thomas Jefferson's provision for religious education indicates the error of the Court's contention that "the Establishment Clause thus stands as an expression of principle on the part of the Founders of our Constitution that religion is too personal, too sacred, too holy, to permit its 'unhallowed perversion' by a civil magistrate."[6] It must be remembered

[5] "Bill for the Establishment of District Colleges and University" (1817).
[6] *Supreme Court of the United States,* No. 468–October Term, 1961, *Engel v. Vitale,* p. 10.

that this principle uttered by James Madison was voiced in connection with a protest against public assessment for the support of an Established Church and not in regard to religious education or prayer in public schools. Neither Jefferson's nor Madison's declarations can be fairly stretched to cover the Court's extension of the Constitutional wall.

The Court's concern is that the use of the Regents' prayer "was contrary to the beliefs, religions, or religious practices" of a very small fraction of the school community. Accordingly, the justices ruled in *behalf* of the conscience of the small minority but *against* the conscience of the majority, who feel that public prayer and recognition of God is part of the American culture and a necessary element in American education. It is often said: "Conscience knows no majorities." Does it know minorities more! Is there no injustice and intolerance when the minority's prejudices and biases prevail? If there is a conscience in the minority against prayer in the public schools, there is a conscience also in the majority demanding it. There must, of course, not be any coercion of the minority to conform, and there was none in New York.

There are assumptions underlying the Supreme Court's decision that demand scrutiny and rigid examination. Among the most important of these theses is the assumption that the education of the child is the responsibility of the government rather than of the parent. It may properly be asked whether the people have delegated that responsibility to federal or state government. Traditionally, education was a matter of local, democratic control. In the early years of the public school system, education was entirely under the control of the township or county and the attitude toward religion was the responsibility of the local community. This was the genius of our public school system. To inject complete state and/or federal control in the public school system destroys the original concept which has proven so beneficial. Local

control will reflect the religion culture of the community and is, after all, the best solution to the problem of curriculum and attitude toward religion. Local control will reflect more closely the parents' convictions and principles.

One cannot, of course, avoid all dangers by local control, but the First Amendment has been a sufficient wall to prevent any particular church from controlling public education. And as far as the recognition of the providence and authority of God in prayer is concerned, this religious activity is not a sectarian issue tending to the establishment of one church organization over the other. We may say that the recognition of God in public affairs is fundamental to our national life and was originated by our Founders, as evidenced by the Declaration of Independence and other public documents.

A Secular State

There has developed in the first part of the twentieth century a strong movement to remove religion entirely from the public domain, and to commit our government and its institutions to the side of irreligion. This had been brought into sharp focus by the Report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church and by the *Engel* v. *Vitale* decision of the United States Supreme Court. The objective of both is a secular state.

One must carefully observe that there are two kinds of secularism—one denies religion and the other denies the relevance or relation of religion to some areas of human activity, such as—in the present case—to government. Neither the Supreme Court nor the Presbyterian Special Committee denies religion, but they would separate governmental functions and institutions from religion. The public school, for example, is to be organized on the premise that secular education can be isolated from all religious teaching.

The separation of the government from religion represents a definite departure from the intent of the Founding Fathers, who never intended to purge public life in America entirely of religion. They never intended to establish irreligion, nor was that the purpose of the First Amendment. Those who founded our nation did not hesitate to declare their dependence upon God, to mention Him in public utterance, to open Congress with prayer, to set up chaplaincies, and to ask the President to call a day of prayer and thanksgiving to God. They did not feel that this was inconsistent with the principle of "a free Church in a free State." As a matter of fact, they knew that the very concept of religious and civil liberty was founded upon Christian principles and teachings.

Will a secular government be as zealous to maintain liberty as our traditionally Christian nation has demonstrated itself to be for almost two centuries? Irreligion has never yet provided a foundation for liberty. It may well be that, with the removal of Christian practices, a despotic state may arise to crush the conscience and, from this, the people in desperation may turn to an authoritarian church. The delicate balance of power between Church and State, so zealously maintained for the past two centuries in this nation, is endangered by the secular movement.

✲ Chapter XII ✲

FOES OF CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION

THE ideal of a free Church in a free State, clearly set forth by Christ in the New Testament, found realization on North American soil. The preceding chapters have shown how difficult and bitter was the struggle to achieve the ideal and to keep the two Kingdoms within their proper jurisdictions. Surely, if we are to prevent future generations from having to renew the battle for separation of Church and State, we need zealously to guard this liberty.

Many years ago John Philpot Curran said:

> The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance, which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt.[1]

This is no mere platitude, for we can easily lose our traditional liberty through negligence or relaxation of watchfulness. The desire to exercise power, whether it springs from good or evil motives, always generates dissatisfaction with established boundaries and limitations—history furnishes altogether too many examples of Church and State forays into forbidden territory to allow a slackening of vigilance on our part now.

While the very success of the principle of Church-State separation in the United States hinders a bold and radical

[1] "Speech on The Right of Election of Lord Mayor of Dublin, 10 July, 1790."

departure from that established trend, it does not preclude subtle deviation as we have already seen in the last chapter. History teaches us that changes in practice come about through little-noted movements that grow slowly over the course of the years. That such a gradual change is now taking place can scarcely escape our notice; it is rather obvious that certain elements in both State and Church do exist which could break down the wall of separation that now exists.

State Encroachments

Since the enactment of the Constitution in 1789, the federal government has exercised great care not to encroach upon ecclesiastical territory. It has not favored any single religious group and has eschewed any thought of establishing a State church as such. The Supreme Court has been, for the most part, judicious in its judgments on borderline cases of jurisdiction and has rigidly adhered to the provisions of the Constitution that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States" and that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The good record of the federal government in this field has been marred recently by the use of federal funds to expand church welfare services and appropriations of public funds for the teaching of religion. Out of Christian compassion, several denominations have instituted hospitals for the care of the sick. The Church has a mandate from her Master to care for the poor and the sick and accordingly has instituted welfare agencies to look after that mandate. Now the federal government has seen fit to subsidize these church agencies and has thus vitiated Christian charity, of which a basic element is *voluntarism*. Freely has the Christian re-

ceived, freely does he give (cf. Matthew 10:8). But federal grants perform a double harm: they destroy the purity of Christian charity by a mixture of involuntary gifts, and they compel segments of society to give to a church agency, a church often with whose beliefs they may not be at all in sympathy. A church-related welfare program may well be an instrument of sectarian religious influence, and this involves the federal government in an unwitting transgression of the Constitution, which forbids it to aid in the establishment of religion.

A further deterioration of the wall of separation was initiated when, for the first time in United States history, the federal government appropriated public funds for direct aid to the teaching of religion. This was done under the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which states in part:

> The national interest requires, however, that the Federal Government give assistance to education for programs which are important to our defense.

Under this Act some 42 fellowships have been awarded in the following religious programs: Old Testament, Biblical and Judaeo-Christian Studies, Church History, Christian Ethics, Philosophy, Buddhist Studies, Church Music, and Theology. One theological seminary based its application specifically upon a desire to "meet the growing need for fully-trained teachers of religion in our colleges, universities, and seminaries."

The growing paternalism of the federal government may well posit a danger to Church-State separation. In its efforts to afford the individual security from cradle to crematory, the State will seek to use the Church to expedite its programs for welfare, as it is beginning to do. There are those within the Church who look upon welfare statism as a species of Christian social action, who forget the essential principle in Christian charity as well as the fact that government sub-

sidies mean government direction and control. The welfare state will not be satisfied to limit itself to boundaries; rather, its attempt is to control the individual, the family, and finally the Church.

An example of the government using a religious organization to further its program is seen in the practice of the federal Agency for International Development which distributes foreign aid. Its basic policy is that "where a project can make a vital contribution to economic development, AID may furnish assistance through a qualified organization even if such organization has a religious affiliation." This, of course, transgresses both the spirit and the letter of the First Amendment.

The greatest protection which we may take against the destructive doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of the State is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Only God is sovereign in all spheres of life and has decreed the limits of State and Church jurisdictions. God is sovereign over the individual conscience, not the State. The State is the servant of God and not the master of men. The biblical doctrines, brought to light in sixteenth-century Geneva, need constantly to be impressed upon us if we are to keep the State—i.e., the federal government—within its God-given jurisdiction.

The Church has been largely responsible for the State encroachment on ecclesiastical territory in that a powerful segment of her organization has encouraged government paternalism as an extension of Christian love and charity. As a matter of fact, an element within the Church has attempted to direct the government not only in its social policies but in other matters as well. Church lobbies have been established in Washington to influence congressional legislation and to exert pressure as needed.

Two divisions of the Christian Church pose danger to traditional separation of Church and State: Roman Catholi-

cism and liberal Protestantism. Of the two, the latter is perhaps the more dangerous, since it has a more subtle approach and its position has not been discerned.

Roman Catholic Encroachment

The Roman Catholic position in regard to the State is well known and has not been hidden in a corner. She has a definite doctrine of Church-State relations which has remained firm and constant in spite of certain expedient flexibilities.

The Roman Catholic Church is unalterably opposed to the principle of separation of Church and State. In the *Syllabus Errorum* of 1864, one of the principal errors condemned is that "The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church." While American Catholic theologians have sought to soften this dogma, their Church nonetheless has maintained consistently a principle of close union between Church and State. For instance, the Rev. John Courtney Murray, S.J. stated that the Vatican should give its formal blessing to the United States pluralist system as a new, permanent, and viable kind of relationship between religion and government. And, to quote *Time* magazine,

> The learned, footnote-stippled discussion ended when Murray was advised by his order that henceforth he would have to clear all his writings on this particular subject with Jesuit headquarters in Rome.[2]

The Roman Catholic Church for centuries has been possessed with the vision of one Christian society under direct authority of political and ecclesiastical power. In regard to the relationship between these two powers, Roman Catholicism has maintained consistently the position that the Church is supreme over the State.

[2] *Time*, Dec. 12, 1960, p. 70.

Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain wrote:

> It is only too clear, however, that these distinct powers are not on the same plane. One is above the other. The terrestrial State, being a moral whole, as such owes duties to God. In its own sphere it is subject to the universal *temporal* sovereignty of Christ; for Christ, as Man, received from God dominion "over the works of His hands" and "all things that have been subjected under His feet" (Heb. 2:8), and it is from Him that kings and the heads of States and every human power derive their authority; the State, as such, is bound to observe His law and the percepts of His morality.[3]

From the authority of Christ, Maritain makes an easy transition to the authority of Church as one may detect in this statement:

> The State, therefore, is indeed sovereign in its own domain, but its domain is subordinate, so that its sovereignty can be neither absolute nor universal. There is only one universal, absolute sovereignty, the sovereignty of the creator. The sovereignty of the Church, universal throughout the whole range of salvation, is clearly more extensive and elevated than that of the State.[4]

While Roman Catholicism is one in maintaining the supremacy of the Church, there are diverse opinions as to the mode of this supremacy. Some, like Pope Gregory VII and Boniface VIII, have claimed direct power to the extent of deposing rulers and absolving their subjects from their oaths and obligations. This claim of direct power seems to have been abandoned today. Replacing it have come the theories of *indirect power* and *directive power.*

The theory of *indirect power* maintains the right to intervene in temporal matters when they affect the spiritual. Anything that concerns the moral activity of a human being comes under the power of the Church. Whether or not a

[3] *The Things That Are Not Caesar's,* p. 6.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 6.

legislative act has a moral implication is determined by the Church. This, of course, means that practically every activity of the State comes under the judgment of the Church and may cause her to exercise indirect power.

The theory of *directive power* maintains the right to enlighten the conscience of rulers and people upon the extent and limits of their obligations in temporal affairs. This is more than moral authority of counsel since it demands obedience on the ground of prophetic authority: it is the voice of God. And, if the Church judges, for example, that the use of contraceptives is wrong, then people and State must listen and render obedience.

One must not be surprised, in accordance with her view of the superiority of the Church, that the Roman Catholic Church has a powerful lobby in Washington that openly attempts to influence legislation. According to her own declaration:

> The National Conference of Catholic Charities works with the National Catholic Welfare Conference in bringing the influence of Catholic social principles and Catholic social philosophy to various movements in the field of social legislation.[5]

Her view of the subordinate place of the State makes it consistent for the Roman Catholic Church to invade the territory and jurisdiction of the State and to expect State aid for the maintenance of her institutions.

Protestant Encroachment

Within the past several decades, there has been a radical departure from the traditional American Protestant position on separation of Church and State. What has been adopted virtually amounts to the Roman Catholic theories of indirect

[5] *Social Work Yearbook,* 1949, p. 626.

and directive power. Dr. John C. Bennett, of Union Theological Seminary of New York, maintains that

> The American pattern of separation of Church and State has never meant that Churches should not seek to influence the policies of the State. Churches of most traditions have made a regular practice of speaking on public issues with which the state also was concerned and they have made great efforts to influence legislation.[6]

He advocates what practically amounts to lobbying in order to influence legislation.

Another influential theologian, Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, writes:

> For at one intensely vital point the formula, "the separation of Church and State," is still wrapped in a haze of ambiguity. It rests upon the unexamined assumption (a false assumption, as we shall soon see) that Church and State have wholly independent and mutually exclusive jurisdictions. It implies—wrongly—that religion and politics are separate spheres of interest and activity.[7]

One may well take issue with the claim that the independent and mutually exclusive jurisdictions of Church and State rest upon an "unexamined assumption." Even from the beginning of the Church the relation with the State had to be examined and expounded; and this has been the case throughout the history of the Church.

Dr. Cavert goes on to say this:

> Other issues there are which affect the churches not so much on the side of their institutional functions and rights as on the side of their concern for morality and justice and social welfare. To secure the ends to which Christian groups feel themselves committed in these fields often requires legislative activity—and the enact-

[6] *Christians and the State*, p. 269.

[7] H. P. Van Dusen, ed., *Church and State in the Modern World*, p. 162.

> ment and enforcement of legislation is the most obvious function of the State.[8]

The Church indeed should show concern for morality, justice, and social welfare and has powerful spiritual means to accomplish these ends. But Dr. Cavert wants to accomplish these ends by the coercive arm of the State and herein departs from the teaching and example of Christ and the apostles. He appeals to "legalism" to accomplish Christian ends rather than to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Cavert also states:

> But, for the Christian of more than superficial insight, "religion's all or nothing." He is dedicated to the reign of God over man's entire life. Every area of human activity or relationship is comprehended within the purpose of God and therefore within the sphere of religious judgment and responsibility. By its very nature Christianity is totalitarian.[9]

This is similar to the reasoning of Roman Catholic theologians. Of course, no believer denies that God is sovereign over his entire life. But that is entirely a different thing from stating that the *Church* is sovereign over the State. Christianity is totalitarian to the degree that God has commanded, but the sovereign God has delegated Caesar, not the Church, to rule over civic affairs. God has limited direct judgment and responsibility of the Church to her own membership, and for that reason Paul asked: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without?" (I Cor. 5:12) and Christ said to a petitioner for justice, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:14.)

The convictions and teachings of such men as Bennett and Cavert have found expression in many Protestant denominations. We refer again to the Report of the Special Commit-

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 187–188.

tee on Church and State of the United Presbyterian Church (see Chapter XI). This Report reflects the thinking of some (by no means the majority) within Protestant denominations. Separation of Church and State, within this Report, seems to be a one-way street. The State must be absolutely neutral and cannot express the least interest in religion. But the Church? The Church may meddle with civil affairs and dictate policy to the State. This is indicated by the Report's statement: "This does not rule out strong expressions of judgment by churches and churchmen on public affairs."[10]

The right of the Church to judge the State is grounded on the sovereignty of God: "Caesar has no autonomy as over against God, whether he knows it or not!"[11] Caesar has no autonomy as over against God, but Caesar does have autonomy *as over against the Church.* The State is amenable to God. So is the Church. But it does not follow nor is it true that the State is amenable to the Church. The whole implication of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States is "a free Church *in a free State.*" As the Church is free from the State so the State is free from the Church. According to the teachings of Christ an autonomous State and an autonomous Church can exist side by side. Indeed they can be mutually helpful; but as to jurisdictions they are independent of each other.

The Report further bases the right of the Church to judge the State on the peculiar Barthian dogma that God and the world *are* reconciled: "The sole ground for the church's critique of the state is that in Christ, God and the World are reconciled."[12] Without entering into the validity of this Barthian dogma, we point out that the Report gives no biblical proof that the State has been placed under the critique of the Church because the world has been reconciled in Christ. The inference comes without biblical evidence.

[10] *Relations between Church and State, A Report,* p. 30.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 33.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 7.

The role of "critique of the State" would give the Church this impossible task: "to know our state and its problems as critically as possible." [13] How can the Church obtain "skilled knowledge of the dynamic world" without the resources available to government and industry? How can the Church evaluate correctly the domestic and foreign affairs of the State without the avenues open to that body? Even now the feeble and amateurish efforts of the Church to become "worldly wise" has diverted her from her main task of redeeming society by saving souls through the proclamation of the Gospel of grace.

In effect, according to the Report, the Church must resort to legalism. *Legalism* is the attempt to reform life by legislative acts. Such statements occur as: "only action through civil law could remedy the social crisis on a national scale"; "the Christian must advocate national reform by legal measures"; "the solution must be found in state action"; "American Protestants now had to find how they could relate themselves to state power as the instrument by which the Christian responsibility for economically depressed persons could be met." [14] No longer the power of the Holy Spirit but State power is the instrument of the Church. No longer Christian charity but the welfare state is the answer. No longer the persuasive power of the Gospel but the coercive power of the State is the instrument of Christian responsibility.

This diversion to legalism on the part of the Church has found concrete embodiment in the official pronouncements of the National Council of Christian Churches. There is scarcely a phase of political, economic, and social life that the NCC has not made some pronouncement on, as can be gleaned from this formidable list:

> land tenure, migratory labor, cooperatives, unemployment compensation, conservation, restraint of monopolies, lowering of tariffs, reduction of arbitrary

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 25–27.

> restrictions on international trade, programs of technical and economic assistance to underdeveloped areas, expansion of trade, reciprocal trade agreements, long-term capital loans, disarmament, Federal housing, health services, international control of armaments, loyalty to the United Nations, collective bargaining, Federal aid to education, congressional investigative procedures, immigration and naturalization laws, Indian affairs, peace treaty with Japan, Japanese war criminals, labor unions, production and distribution of wealth, industrial relations, minimum wage legislation, universal military training, cultural exchanges between nations, and segregation.[15]

This encroachment on what, for the most part, are civil affairs is justified by the concept of "totalitarian Christianity." As the "prophetic voice" of Christ upon earth, the visible Church takes upon herself the right to pronounce upon all the affairs of life. And this without the command of Christ, the Head of the Church.

That this invasion of the political arena is a transition from the traditional Protestant position is seen from an examination of Church creeds. Luther's conviction is clearly stated in the Augsburg Confession of 1530:

> Seeing, then, that the ecclesiastical power deals with things eternal, and is exercised only by the ministry of the word, it does not interfere with the administration of civil affairs, any more than does the art of singing. . . . Wherefore the ecclesiastical and civil powers are not to be confounded.

The Presbyterian conviction is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, contained in the Constitution of the Church:

> Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to inter-

[15] A Pronouncement, A Policy Statement of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. (Pronouncements 1.1–1 to 29.2–1).

> meddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.[16]

That the Roman Catholic Church, victim for over a millennium with delusions of domination over all spheres of life, should be incapable of separating the jurisdictions of the heavenly and the earthly kingdoms, is hardly surprising. But it is less excusable that Protestants who, through suffering and death, were delivered from the absolute Church and the absolute State, should fall into the same error. Yet more and more church assemblies are turning to civil affairs and are neglecting her spiritual weapons and powers. The Church is losing its spiritual saltiness while the moral climate worsens in the meantime.

A foe who is not discerned is doubly dangerous. The gradualism of the transition within the Protestant Church makes it difficult to perceive the danger to Church-State separation. The leaders of this movement strain to make the invasion of the civil sphere appear to be "Christian" and invoke the name of Christ to bless the Church's intrusion into the realm of Caesar. If ever there is need to study the panorama of history, it is the present day. The responsibility rests chiefly upon the Christian, who is a citizen of both Kingdoms and who has most to lose if either Kingdom encroaches the jurisdiction of the other.

Panorama of History

The panoramic canvas of history reveals outstanding events of Church-State relations: Christ crucified on the false charge of being a political Messiah—the primitive Church protected by pagan Rome—the Red Dragon persecuting the early

[16] Chapter XXXI, 4.

Church—Constantine's army with the sign of the cross—Charlemagne crowned by Pope Leo III—King Henry IV standing barefoot in the snow—the Triregnum of papal power—Calvin's Geneva—John Knox before Queen Mary—the Westminster Assembly of Divines—the Constitution of the United States with its First Amendment. These events portray the long and bitter struggle between the two Kingdoms before proper and Scriptural jurisdictions were established.

What outstanding event will history next depict upon the panoramic canvas of Church-State religions? This will depend, in great measure, on the vigilance or lack of it, of the Christian citizen.

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